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NOMINATION OF GEN. THOMAS K. TURNAGE

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

NINETY-NINTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

THE NOMINATION OF GEN. THOMAS K. TURNAGE, U.S. ARMY (RET.), TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

MARCH 18, 1986

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NOMINATION OF GEN. THOMAS K. TURNAGE, U.S. ARMY (RET.), TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 1986

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m., in room SR-418, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Frank H. Murkowski (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Murkowski, Simpson, Thurmond, Specter, Denton, Cranston, DeConcini, and Rockefeller.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MURKOWSKI

Chairman MURKOWSKI. I would ask that the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee come to order. We are here this morning to consider the nomination of Mr. Thomas K. Turnage for the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs.

It is certainly a key position representing our 28 million veterans. It has also been estimated that almost 80 million Americans—families of veterans—are touched by some aspect of the Veterans' Administration.

It is little wonder, then, that I, and many of my colleagues, and the leaders of every veterans' organization continue to urge the President to establish a Cabinet seat for the Veterans' Administration.

It is possible, and it is my hope, that today's nominee, Tom Turnage, could be the first Secretary of Veterans' Affairs. Today, the day after St. Patrick's Day, is a good day for wishful thinking, but it has certainly been an objective of my colleagues and one that I continue to push for.

The Administrator must have an appreciation and an understanding of many facets of care, particularly on the medical care system, which is the largest, in fact, in the Western World. He must be a planner of skill; able to ensure the continuation of quality health care and benefits programs, advances in data processing, construction, and modernization.

During the past weeks I have had an opportunity to meet with Tom Turnage; we discussed these matters and other challenges. I believe he shares with us the deep concern for the narrow range of options imposed on the VA by the Deficit Reduction Act. The balance of the 1980's will test just how much can be done with limited resources to maintain the Nation's commitment to those who have

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served in our defense. I have no doubt that General Turnage will work closely with the committee to keep the VA on a philosophical and financially sound track.

This morning we will have an opportunity to discuss the VA's future with General Turnage. We appreciate how much time it will take to come up to speed on the many VA programs; however, from his past record, he is one who learns quickly. Today we simply want to get a sense of the General's perception of the VA and its future, and how he perceives his role in shaping and expanding that future.

After General Turnage, the committee will hear testimony from the veterans' organizations; the DAV, the VFW, the PVA, the American Legion, and the AMVETS, in one panel.

General Turnage, periodically witnesses appear before committees and are introduced by Senators from their State. Well, I have the distinct honor and pleasure of introducing you today, even though we are worlds apart.

It says here by the writer, just as yesterday was a day to be Irish, today is an appropriate date to be an Alaskan. So welcome aboard, particularly if you happen to be a nominee for the Veterans' Administration. In case you have not picked up the subtlety of that, why ordinarily you have a Senator from your State introducing you, and I have the privilege today.

Thomas K. Turnage, the Director of the Selective Service since October 1981, comes to this confirmation hearing with a distinguished background of service to the United States, including assignments to each of the Army's components—the Active, the Reserve, and the National Guard.

Commissioned in the U.S. Army in 1942, Tom Turnage began his long career as an infantry officer during World War II, and, coupled with his continuing duty in the Korean conflict, developed, first hand, a valuable perspective of the life of a combat soldier.

In the course of his duty, Tom received the Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with the First Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star, and the Meritorious Service Medal, among other national and California State decorations and service medals.

He also served as the commander of the 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized) on two occasions, and was the deputy commanding general of the Military Department, California. With four active duty tours to his credit, there can be little doubt that the veterans will have a soldier's soldier taking point.

Prior to his appointment as Director of the Selective Service, Tom served with the Deputy Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, working to improve the training and mobilization readiness programs for Selected Reserve of all services. In July 1981, General Turnage was appointed executive officer of the Military Manpower Task Force, chaired by Defense Secretary Weinberger.

A graduate of the program for senior managers in government at Harvard, and holding a B.S. in marketing from UCLA, and an M.S. in international relations from George Washington University, General Turnage is clearly capable of understanding and taking on the unique challenges of the Veterans' Administration.

General Turnage is here today with his wife, B.J. Would you please be recognized? Pleasure to have you with us. [Applause.]

I understand your two children, Andrea and Robert, are out on the west coast. Is that right?

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. We are sure that they are with you in their thoughts today.

Tom, your predecessor, Harry Walters, served American veterans well and with distinction. I know he will be missed by many, but I am just as sure you will be more than able to carry on a very proud and honored tradition of service to the men and women of our Armed Forces.

General Turnage, before we hear your testimony, I want to recognize my colleague, the committee's ranking member and one of your two great State Senators, Alan Cranston, for some remarks that he may have.

Senator Cranston.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CRANSTON

Senator CRANSTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I am delighted to join you, Frank, and the other members of the committee this morning in welcoming Thomas Turnage and others to this hearing on his nomination to be Administrator of Veterans' Affairs.

Frankly, it is not clear to me whether Tom Turnage is a Californian or what. He was born in Texas, educated in Texas, and in Massachusetts, and in California. His residence is in Washington, DC, but, of course, that does not mean much. Normally, there is another residence involved. I am delighted to claim you as a Californian and, therefore, to introduce you this morning.

The biography of the nominee has been given by the chairman so I will not go into that except to note that he does have a wide ranging and fine education, is highly decorated for many matters, including a number of State of California decorations; is a fellow member of The American Legion, of which I am a member; is a member of the National Guard Association; and has many, many other affiliations, and many, many other accomplishments.

In California, Tom served as deputy adjutant general of the National Guard, commanding general of the 40th Infantry Division. Later, in Washington, he served as Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Reserve Affairs; and he is now a Presidential appointee as Director of Selective Service. Tom, you bring a very distinguished background to this nomination.

It is important for the effectiveness of the VA and the well-being of our Nation's veterans that we proceed promptly, as the chairman is doing, with consideration of this nomination. Having a fully functioning Administrator onboard is critical to the stability and effectiveness of the VA. I believe it is vital that the strong leadership that Harry Walters brought to the agency be sustained. It is my hope that Mr. Turnage can continue in this fashion.

As I have said many times in the past, I do not view veterans' issues as partisan issues. However, after 5 years of having seen this administration's approach to veterans' issues and after we have

been presented with a budget proposal for the VA that is the worst I have seen in my 17 years in the Senate, I do have a number of questions that I believe need to be asked at this time.

As a new Administrator takes office, he will be facing a number of very important challenges. Probably the greatest of these is maintaining the integrity of the VA and of the programs of benefits and services it provides to veterans, their survivors, and dependents during this period of tremendous fiscal constraints. Many veterans' programs are facing particularly difficult problems in fiscal year 1986 because of requirements of the Gramm-Rudman legislation to reduce the Federal budget deficit to zero incrementally by fiscal year 1991.

I fought hard to protect veterans' programs from deep cuts under this legislation. We were successful only in exempting VA compensation and pension from cuts and limiting cuts in funding for VA health-care services. I believe strongly that drastic steps must be taken to reduce the deficit and achieve a balanced budget, but I believe just as strongly that keeping our commitments to our Nation's veterans must continue to be a top priority. I will be asking Mr. Turnage certain questions aimed at determining whether he shares that belief.

In my mind, one of the most critical factors that must be examined at this time is the commitment the nominee is prepared to make in terms of being an advocate for veterans, especially with respect to matters affecting the budget of the VA.

After the President's budget was submitted for fiscal years 1982, 1983, 1985, and 1986, the administration, without consulting with the Administrator of the VA, proposed or supported budget revisions making deep cuts in VA programs. The administration made these decisions to cut VA funds on each of those occasions without the person then serving as Administrator having had any opportunity to present his views before the decision was made. And this occurred despite certain assurances from Mr. Turnage's two predecessors with respect to their personal access to the President or his top White House advisers regarding VA budget matters.

Thus, I urged Mr. Turnage to obtain very specific assurances from the President that, as Administrator, he will be consulted and his views taken into account before any significant administration decisions on, or revisions of, the VA's budget are made or agreed to—at any point in the budget and appropriations processes. Mr. Turnage's letter of March 12 in response to my February 20 letter deals with these assurances in a generally forthcoming manner, and we will be further examining those assurances this morning.

Tom, I very much appreciate your efforts prior to this hearing in pursuing this matter of assurances in meetings with the President and OMB Director Miller, as well as your providing answers to my prehearing written questions last week. I am grateful for your cooperation in responding in a timely and generally responsive fashion.

Mr. Chairman, I ask that the letters to which I referred and the nominee's responses to my prehearing questions be made a part of the hearing record.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. They will be entered in as appropriate.[1]

Senator CRANSTON. Thank you very much.

I also note, with gratitude, that Mr. Turnage's intercession produced an outpouring last Friday of VA responses to prehearing and posthearing questions that the chairman and I submitted in connection with our February 20 hearing on the VA budget. Although some questions still remain unanswered and others will require followup, I congratulate Mr. Turnage on succeeding in getting as many responses to us as he did.

Before we move on to the consideration of Mr. Turnage's nomination, I believe it is appropriate that we express our thanks and appreciation once again to Harry Walters for a job well done. As I said at a January 29 farewell reception in his honor, Harry Walters gave us a first-class performance; he was an honest, hard-driving, totally committed, and compassionate Administrator of Veterans' Affairs. Mr. Chairman, I ask that the full text of my remarks at that reception be inserted in the record of this hearing at this point.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. It will be entered in the record as if read.

[The following farewell remarks were supplied for the record:]

When Harry's appointment was first announced, very few people in Veterans' Affairs knew what to expect. What we got was a first-class performance from an honest, hard-driving, totally committed and compassionate Administrator of Veterans' Affairs.

Harry Walters is not perfect—although from the remarks you'll be hearing tonight and those last night at the VFW, one might wonder about that. He made his mistakes, as do all of us. But his overall record in a very demanding job at a very demanding time was enviable. He boosted VA and veterans morale which had been seriously undermined.

He related well and often to the service organizations and generally did well with the authorizing committees. He was fair and square. From our side of the aisle, I can attest that he did not treat Veterans' Affairs as a partisan matter.

He was available and accessible to me and my staff, and we greatly appreciate his sense of fairness. I also want to transfer a little of the praise for Harry's administration of the VA over to Fred Bidgood, his very able Executive Assistant. Fred is a consummate professional and a real straight shooter.

Harry, you've been good for the VA, good for the President, good for the Hill, and most important, good for America's veterans. On behalf of the Democratic members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and the minority staff, Harry, we thank you for a job well done and wish you Godspeed and great success in your challenging new job in private industry.

Senator CRANSTON. In closing, I want to reemphasize my view that repaying the debts we owe to those who gave of themselves in the Armed Services is a continuing cost of our Nation's defense and a fundamental national obligation. This should not become a partisan issue. The challenges that we all face are great and the answers will not be easy, but I pledge to do my best, Tom, if you are confirmed as Administrator, as I tried to do with Harry Walters, to be helpful and to work with you cooperatively as we carry out our respective responsibilities.

Thank you very much.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Thank you very much, Alan.

Senator CRANSTON. I would like to ask that a statement by Senator Mitchell be entered into the record.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. It will be entered into the record.[2]

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[1] See pp. 43 and 87.

[2] See p. 46.

Senator Strom Thurmond, we are very pleased to have you with us.

Senator THURMOND. Thank you very much.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. As President pro tem of the Senate, please proceed.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR THURMOND

Senator THURMOND. Thank you very much.

I want to say just a word or two first. I want to commend Mr. Walters for the very fine job he did as Administrator. I think he was fair to the Government and he showed compassion to the veterans. I was very pleased with the manner in which he conducted the office.

Next, I want to endorse General Turnage. He is well qualified to fill this position, and I probably cannot be here since I am in Armed Services at the time you take a vote, so I will leave my proxy with you.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Thank you, sir.

Senator THURMOND. To vote for him.

I just want to say, General Turnage, you are undertaking a tough job. Everyone who has had this job has had a hard position to fill, because you cannot please everybody. You have got to be fair to the Government. You have got to hew to the line. At the same time you must be fair to the veterans. We would not have a country if it was not for the veterans, the men and women in uniform. They fight for freedom and as a result today we have more freedom in this country than any nation in the world.

If you have a very close question and cannot resolve it in some way between the Government and the veteran, then tilt it a little bit toward the veteran.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Thank you very much, Senator Thurmond. We very much appreciate your statement and understand that your other duties require your presence in the committee.

We are ready to proceed now with the statement from the General, General Turnage.

STATEMENT OF GEN. THOMAS K. TURNAGE, U.S. ARMY (RET.), NOMINEE FOR ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

General TURNAGE. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the very warm welcome. I also appreciate the very kind remarks made by Senator Cranston, the minority leader. I am also very appreciative of the recognition of Mrs. Turnage here this morning. You were very kind and thoughtful.

As a veteran of two wars with over 39 years of combined Active and Reserve military service, I have the deepest appreciation for the selflessness and sacrifice manifested by our veterans. Today, there are over 27 million individuals who can proudly be counted as veterans or as dependents of those who gave their lives to ensure that the freedoms and principles of this great Nation will endure.

If confirmed, I shall devote my full energy to the task of insuring that the care and benefits earned under the law by veterans and

their family members are administered to them in a manner which reflects the gratitude of the American people. Consistent with that effort, I will strive to utilize enlightened management techniques and employ the latest technology to maintain the highest levels of economy and efficiency in support of the will of the President and the Congress.

I make this commitment with full awareness of the magnitude of the tasks before us. I have studied the reports and statements of previous Administrators, congressional committees, and independent evaluators during the recent past and appreciate the significant contributions of the individuals who have labored so diligently in service to our veterans and our Government.

I have met with representatives of some of the veterans' organizations and have received letters from individual veterans. And from these meetings and letters, I have gained some insight into what they view as the most critical challenges in the future. In this regard, I am pleased to see representatives from many of the veterans' organizations here today and look forward to continuing communications with them.

And, we do face significant challenges as we look toward providing the health care and benefits to American veterans into the 21st century. Indeed, the face of America's veterans is changing as the number of veterans age 65 or older grows from about 5 million today to about 9 million by the year 2000.

Additionally, the number of female veterans will expand by approximately 10 percent by the turn of the century. These changes in the veteran population will require a careful assessment of the services provided by the Veterans' Administration as well as the facilities and the systems required to provide these services.

Additionally, each year we gain increased knowledge concerning the special needs of younger veterans who served during the Vietnam or post-Vietnam era. We must assimilate this increased knowledge and ensure that the care and benefits provided to these individuals reflect the advances in understanding in both the physical and psychological medicine.

Most importantly, as we prepare to meet the needs of the future, we must ensure that care and benefits are extended to each eligible veteran in a manner which recognizes the individual nature of his service and his sacrifice.

The impact of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 on the Veterans' Administration will be one of the key issues that must be quickly addressed. Meeting deficit reduction targets while maintaining the quality of health care and benefits for veterans will require the highest level of dedication and innovation from all employees of the Veterans' Administration and the assistance and support of other Government agencies as well as veterans' organizations and the American people. I am certain that I can count on that support and assistance.

The precedent in America for providing care to those injured in military service predates the establishment of these United States. In 1636, the Pilgrims of Plymouth enacted a law providing compensation to those injured in the war against the Pequot Indians. Today, over 220,000 individuals serve in 172 medical centers and over 400 other facilities extending the care and benefits provided

by law to our Nation's veterans. I am dedicated to the principle that our veterans will be treated with the compassion and the concern that they have earned, and that the administration of veterans' affairs will be conducted in the most efficient and economical manner possible.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you, and I am prepared at this time to respond to your questions.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Thank you very much. We have been joined by two other Senators, Senator Denton and Senator DeConcini.

Senator Denton, do you have an opening statement? We have had opening statements from both myself, and Senator Cranston, and Senator Thurmond, and the General has just made his statement. And upon your remarks, at the conclusion of your remarks, we have a few questions for the General.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DENTON

Senator DENTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to welcome General Turnage, and mention that he has a tough act to follow, but I am optimistic about his ability, considering his past performance, to fill the shoes of Harry Walters.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, he is a very well qualified nominee who should make an excellent Administrator. And you, Mr. Chairman, and the rest of the members of the committee know how difficult it will be for him to serve without great strain in this job. It is not an easy job.

But I am confidcnt that with your experience, and objectivity, and courage, and compassion for our veterans that you will be able to fill the bill, General.

We have Gramm-Rudman-Hollings now, and we have predictions. Les Aspin went down to north Alabama with Congressman Flippo not long ago, and I guess that Congressman Flippo thought that he was going to tell the Huntsville area and the other cities around there that are much involved in the defense business some good news, but he told them the truth.

He said that we will have defense cuts of $60 to $90 billion a year—that was his estimate—coming up before us because of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings. I believe that we will be forced into some position something like that. My belief was strong enough to force me to vote against Gramm-Rudman-Hollings for that reason. I do not think that we can afford to subordinate the provision for our national security in the protection of our interests overseas, which I think the lack of protection has cost us more money than the deficit, and that is the untold part of the situation.

Veterans are another unanticipated neglect, and that is another reason that I did not appreciate the forfeiting of our necessity to address individually the various expressed requirements for appropriations, and rather turn them over to computers and quasi-governmental organizations.

Now we have to complete the contract, fulfill the desserts of our veterans. We cannot just blame it on a computer if we do not. And you are going to be playing a major part, General, in trying to find the fine line there. We are going to have to redefine our budgetary

and service priorities within the VA, so that we can get proper care for veterans, and to do so with more efficient use of its budget dollars.

One area of improvement which has been pointed out by other Government agencies for more than a decade is the correction of the practice by which the VA buys new hospitals all of the time instead of as they have been urged to do: to buy existing hospitals where possible and save a great deal of money.

There is a lot of fat in buying new hospitals at all times. I think that if the Administrator does not get into it, the VA is never going to do something about it. It is some institutional habit, an attitude on the part of the bureaucracy, and it has got to be cut through, and I believe that that is going to require your personal attention.

I believe that the veterans and the VA will require your creative thinking about how to get more "bang for the buck," and that we ensure that maximum dollars go for providing actual services rather than bureaucracy and boondoggles.

I do have questions, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to ask them during the question period. Thank you.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Thank you very much, Senator. Senator DeConcini.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DeCONCINI

Senator DECONCINI. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I think that it is an excellent idea for you to proceed with these hearings and to expedite this nomination. I think that it is very important.

General Turnage, I am pleased that this confirmation is before us. The Veterans' Administration is the largest independent agency in the Federal Government with a budget of more than $26 billion. As you know, it has been without a full-time Administrator for almost 2 months. That is far too long. So I want to thank the chairman for moving forward with this hearing in an expeditious manner.

As I indicated to you in our personal meeting last month, General, I believe that the most critical ingredient for your success as the Administrator of the VA is for you to play an advocate role for the veterans within the administration.

I believe that there is bipartisan agreement, that Harry Walters was an outstanding Administrator, certainly the most capable Administrator that I have had the pleasure of working with since being appointed to this committee in 1981.

He was successful because he skillfully combined the qualities of manager, politician, and advocate for veterans far better than his predecessors. He was always willing to sit down and discuss the difficult issues with the members of this committee as well as the leadership of the national veterans organizations, and he did so on a regular basis. I would urge you to continue that valuable tradition.

As I indicated to you during our meeting, Harry Walters will be a tough act to follow. While Harry did not win every battle, those who have an interest in and a responsibility for veterans' programs were confident that he was in there fighting for them.

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Unfortunately, too often, he was reduced to a spectator status when critical budget decisions were being made in various Rose Garden strategies. This is one of the reasons why I believe so strongly that the Administrator of the Veterans' Administration should be elevated to Cabinet-level status.

In this era of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings and severe budgetary constraints, it is all the more important that you personally participate in all major negotiations involving the VA budget.

I was very pleased with your reply to one of the questions that I submitted to you in advance of these hearings indicating that you have discussed this matter with the President, and have received explicit assurances that you will be afforded every opportunity to present your views on policy decisions affecting the Nation's veterans and the resources needed by the VA. That is welcome news to this Senator, and I am sure to each and every member of the committee.

As a decorated veteran of two wars, with 39 years of combined Active and Reserve military service, you clearly have the background, the experience, and the sensitivity to be an effective and compassionate Administrator. But it is your commitment to the veterans of this Nation that will be tested on a daily basis.

If the veterans perceive you to be a rubberstamp of administration policy, your days as Administrator will be long and difficult, I predict. So I strongly encourage you to jump into this fray, and to engage in the battle wherever that is necessary to protect veterans programs.

The position for which you have been nominated poses an enormous challenge. I wish you well, and pledge to work closely with you and with your staff in any way we can to help you to achieve what is necessary for the veterans of this country.

I would like once again to extend my sincere congratulations to you for your nomination, General. You have a big job. I am sure that you are up to it, and we want you to succeed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General TURNAGE. Thank you, sir.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Senator DeConcini. I want to recognize at this time the Acting Administrator, Ev Alvarez, who is with us today, and I am sure that you are participating in thought as well as looking forward to working with General Turnage after he is confirmed by our committee. It is always a pleasure to have you at our committee hearings, Ev.

Senator DECONCINI. Mr. Chairman, if I could, I would like to echo those comments. I think that Mr. Alvarez has done an outstanding job even before he was the Acting Administrator. It was a difficult position not having a designated nominee by the President, but I think that he has conducted himself very well, and has kept that agency moving very firmly. Thank you.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. It is always nice to have compliments on your contribution during the time that Harry Walters has been vacated from the position through his resignation, and as we contemplate filling the position with General Turnage.

Senator DENTON. Mr. Chairman, may I add my own feelings in that respect toward Mr. Alvarez. I have had many reasons to admire and respect him over the years in his acting capacity as

well as in his previous capacity in the Veterans' Administration. He has certainly done nothing but expand my own consciousness of how much he has done for his country. Thank you, sir.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Senator Denton.

It would be my observation, General Turnage, that you have some pretty good help back there. I want to express our strong appreciation, speaking on behalf of my colleagues, for your expeditious response to the prehearing questions which were proposed both by myself and other committee members.

Some of those questions, you may get again this morning. I trust that your answers will be the same. To allow you the opportunity to state those responses for the record, we will proceed. Prior to that, I would ask my colleagues for unanimous consent that if a meeting of the committee occurs later this morning to vote for the nomination of General Turnage, that any Senator present at this hearing may be counted as present for purposes of that meeting, but only for purposes of constituting a committee quorum of seven for voting on the nomination, and for no other purpose including not for the requirement of four members being present to transact any business, and not for the purpose of the presence of a minority member.

And if it is any satisfaction, it is this particular statement which perhaps you did not understand either that has been cleared by counsel for both parties. And it simply means that if there is no objection, that we can proceed to vote in some legal manner.

Senator DECONCINI. Just out of curiosity, Mr. Chairman, I am a lawyer, too, but I did not understand that. I have not been in law school for many, many years, but I assume that is unanimous consent.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. That is what they tell me, Senator.

Senator DECONCINI. That is what it is.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Do you suppose if we sent them both into the backroom and asked them to simplify that, that it would take them more than a half a day? [Laughter.]

Well, if there is any question, at least we know the intent. Unless there is any objection, and hearing none, we would assume that we better move on.

Along with Senator Thurmond, I sponsored a bill, General, to elevate the position of VA Administrator to Cabinet-level status. And in my view and in many of my colleague's, the VA Program should be considered as a high-level priority in policy and budget deliberations.

Tell us a little bit about your meeting with the President and Mr. Miller of OMB, did you have an opportunity to discuss access to the President? You already indicated in our comments to Senator DeConcini that you have had that access. And how do you perceive your role with continued access to the White House and the eventual elevation of the position of Veterans' Administrator to a Cabinet-level department?

General TURNAGE. If I may for a moment, Mr. Chairman, I would reflect on the last 4 years that I have enjoyed as the Director of the Selective Service System. In that capacity, I have not at any time found it difficult to achieve the coordination necessary to be sure that my views were known with regard to issues, or poli-

cies, or regulations, or otherwise having to do with the administration of that agency.

However, when I found that I may be nominated for this post, I was aware of concerns that had been expressed that proper or appropriate involvement with or access to the President or the Director of the OMB had not been accorded.

In order to allay concerns relating to that relationship, I sought a meeting with the President. It was so granted. I subsequently sought a meeting with Mr. Miller of OMB, and it was so granted. I spoke to them personally about the issue, concerns, and impressions.

I received their explicit assurance that in issues involving concerns, particularly of an agency of the magnitude of the Veterans' Administration, that I would have access to them, and would have every opportunity both in the initial budget preparing process as well as later in the deliberations relating to decisions involving that budget to express the views of the Veterans' Administration and be fully involved.

I left both of those meetings with the principals as well as members of their staff with a feeling of comfort that I would be accorded such an opportunity, and feel completely comfortable with that.

From my perspective, I sought this job knowing that it was at its current level without Cabinet status. I feel confident, based on the meetings with them and with my past experience in the administration, that the status of Cabinet level is not required in order to accomplish this job, although I do recognize that that status would be an enhancement from the standpoint of elevating the interests of the veterans.

I think that any aspect of my personal involvement would be inappropriate and discussion of possible promotion in that capacity would be better suggested by you as chairman of this committee, or the President, or someone else.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. There have been some allegations concerning a role that you allegedly played in the promotion of Attorney General Edward Meese's rise in the Army Reserves, and that has been stated in various communications.

Could you comment on that?

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir, I can. I first knew Mr. Meese when he was the chief of staff to the Governor of California during the years that the President was the Governor of California, and I knew him in two capacities. I knew him as chief of staff to the Governor, and I knew him in his capacity as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve with an assignment to a unit in the San Francisco Bay area.

I was conscious of that relationship over a period time. Even after the administration left office in 1978, Mr. Meese continued in his capacity as a Reserve officer, and we made at least one or two entreaties to get him involved in a Reserve capacity in the National Guard, but his duties did not allow it at the time.

I simply state that to give the impression that we were conscious of the contribution that he could make even then.

Subsequently, in 1979, I was assigned to the Pentagon as a Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Re-

serve Affairs, and while I was in that job the current administration came in, President Reagan and his staff.

It was during the transition period after the election that I had a meeting with Mr. Meese, and suggested to him that I would like to serve in some capacity in this administration particularly as it related to manpower. We continued our relationship from that point, and it was in the early part of the new year of 1981 that I was informed that I would serve in two capacities, the Director of the Selective Service and also as the Executive Officer of the Military Manpower Task Force which was to be chaired by Secretary Weinberger.

I continued as Executive Officer while all of the processing was in progress attendant to the appointment as Director of the Selective Service, and I still functioned in the Pentagon not having moved to the Selective Service System. I did not go to the Selective Service System until October 31, 1981.

Sometime during the summer of that year, I was called by a mutual friend and asked if there was a Reserve space available for Mr. Meese in the Selective Service System. I said that I did not know, not having been there, but that I would make an inquiry.

I did that, knowing full well that there may be, because we have some 728 Reserve and National Guard officers who are assigned to the Selective Service System on an ongoing basis. In addition to that, we have one detachment which is located in the Selective Service headquarters and comprised of people who essentially work in Government here in the District.

I called the Administrative Officer at the Selective Service System, and asked him if such a space was available and if in fact it was determined in the Pentagon by others that Mr. Meese were eligible for such an assignment, if the assignment could be arranged. The answer was "Yes."

I suggested two guidelines. One, that it be done in complete propriety, legally, and without embarrassment to Mr. Meese or anyone else recognizing the delicate nature of his assignment in the Government.

It came back that on the basis of expert opinion rendered by people in the Pentagon that he could be assigned, and he was assigned. He was assigned in July of that year. And as I say, subsequently in October of that year, I went to the Selective Service.

He continued to perform his duties with Selective Service. It was the year following, in November 1982, that I received another call from the same individual in the Pentagon in the Chief of Army Reserve Office asking whether or not I had any concerns about Mr. Meese going before a promotion board for promotion from lieutenant colonel to colonel.

I replied that I would be absolutely pleased to participate to the extent that the professional military requirements could be met. I was assured that if we could obtain a waiver for his assignment for attendance at the national security management course, which is a course conducted at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces here at Fort McNair, that it would be appropriate and it would be a prerequisite to his eligibility for promotion.

I requested that waiver without hesitation and with enthusiasm, simply because the nature of that course had to do with mobiliza-

tion procedures, the conduct of the National Security Council, and other factors of Government having to do with mobilization of the Nation with which he was intimately familiar.

We subsequently wrote the letter to the commandant of the course, who was an admiral in the Navy at the time. He approved it, sent it back. I sent it to the Pentagon, and then the promotion procedures were followed. Mr. Meese was subsequently promoted.

I think probably that is sufficient detail based on the nature of your question.

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Thank you very much, General. I have no further questions. Senator Denton.

Senator DENTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Turnage, what is your view regarding the need for or wisdom of acquiring existing hospital facilities rather than building new ones to provide health care services to veterans?

General TURNAGE. Senator Denton, there are a number of alternatives that must be considered, in my judgment, in order to meet the needs of the veteran community, particularly as we get greater and greater numbers of older veterans.

For example, in my prefacing remarks, I made some comment about the fact that we expect to have an increase in veterans over 65 from some 5 to 9 million people by the year 2000. So one approach alone, it seems to me, will not be satisfactory to meet those needs.

And while construction still must proceed based on the antiquity of some of the hospitals that we have in the system, it seems to me that the acquisition of some hospitals that may not be fully utilized in the civilian community as well as the utilization of community as well as State nursing homes and other kinds of alternatives all must be considered.

Senator DENTON. Are you familiar, General, with the need for the provision of additional VA——

Chairman MURKOWSKI. Excuse me; Senator Specter is going to chair a portion of the balance of the hearing. I have got a couple of things outside. Thank you very much. Please proceed, Senator.

Senator DENTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome Senator Specter as the new acting chairman.

Are you familiar with the need for the provision of additional VA services along the gulf coast of Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida; and if so, can you tell me where those plans involve any new construction, and when the construction will be undertaken?

General TURNAGE. Senator, I am aware that there was a special study made particularly in the Florida area. I am not privy to information with regard to that because I have not had time to look into it. I am also advised about a priority of construction of additional installations for the Veterans' Administration in that area of the country.

But if I may, I would prefer that to be a matter of record, because I cannot give you all of the specifics from my mind.

[Subsequently, the Veterans' Administration furnished the following information:]

The following construction plans and actions developed through the Medical District Initiated Planning (MEDIPP) process have been identified for Medical District

No. 12 which has the planning responsibility for most of Florida including part of the Florida Panhandle:

A Radiation Therapy Unit is scheduled to be operational at the VAMC Tampa, FL in 1987.

A Diagnostic Magnetic Radiation Imaging (MRI) unit is planned for VAMC Gainesville, FL in 1986.

The following construction plans and actions developed through the MEDIPP process have been identified for Medical District No. 10 which has the planning responsibility for all of Alabama, Mississipi and part of the Florida Panhandle:

An Outpatient clinic located in Pensacola, FL is planned to open in 1986.

Senator DENTON. I know that you have not had time to be entirely read into it, but are you familiar yet with Providence Hospital in Mobile, AL; and if so, are you aware of its status from investigation studies as to suitability for VA use as a hospital, as a nursing home facility, or as both?

General TURNAGE. Only peripherally so, sir, and this is the result of a personal visit that I had, and I knew that you were interested in the matter. I asked the Veterans' Administration to provide me additional detail on it, so that I could look into the specifics of it after I find myself in the new status if that occurs.

Senator DENTON. Are you familiar with the requirement in law, Public Law 99-166, for the conduct of a study of the acquisition of an existing medical facility in an urban area for the provision of hospital and nursing home services?

General TURNAGE. No, sir, I am not.

Senator DENTON. There is such a requirement. And since you are not familiar with it, I guess that you cannot tell me the status of that study and when the committee may expect it to be provided. But when you are apprised of that situation, I would appreciate it if you would update me as to the status of the study that I referred to in Public Law 99-166, and when we may expect that study to be provided. And I would hope that you will ensure that it will be a comprehensive and fair one.

You understand it is a question of letting me know?

General TURNAGE. Indeed. Yes, sir.

[Subsequently, the Veterans' Administration furnished the following information:]

The study required by Section 305 of Public Law 99-166 has been divided into two phases. Phase one consists of determining the "need for" a medical facility capable of providing both hospital and nursing home care to eligible veterans in an urban area. The study team which will conduct phase one of the study, consisting of two Regional Planners and an independent consultant, has been appointed. The study protocol is undergoing review. The expected completion date for phase one of the study is June 27, 1986.

Phase two of the study will examine the feasibility of purchasing a medical facility capable of providing both hospital and nursing home care if the need for such is determined in phase one of the study. A completion date for phase two has not been established as it rests on the outcome of phase one.

Senator DENTON. I will conclude by repeating to you that when the matter of Providence Hospital first came to me I thought that it was, and I suspected that it was, just a State interest, a city interest. I would lean over backward to avoid representing it if it is going to harm the national interest in any way. And I make that clear in every—at every occasion in which it is appropriate.

But upon study, I found that Providence Hospital had been found suitable for such a purpose. I found that, institutionally, the bureaucracy in the VA has simply refused to follow what appear to

be very necessary recommendations that such hospitals be procured rather than starting from scratch with brandnew ones every time on the premise that they are not precisely in the center of the veterans' population by somebody's measurement.

If the hospital is close enough to the population and it is suitable, everyone urges the VA to buy it, yet they never buy it. I do not know why.

I understand, however, that a member of the immediate staff of the Administrator, the staff which you may inherit—and I will be happy to identify to you privately the individual to whom this remark is attributed—recently was heard to make remarks to the following effect at a reception for the new Commander of the American Legion. Now, this was reported to me, and I have no reason to discredit the source of the information. The gentleman on your staff is said to have remarked: "Senator Denton is trying to dump a worn-out Catholic hospital in a run-down neighborhood on the VA, a hospital we do not need and do not want. If we wanted a VA hospital in Mobile we would build a new one there."

He further stated: "We would build a new one there if we wanted one." That is in opposition to the policy which the VA is supposed to undertake. They are supposed to look and see if there is one already there that should be bought. They already have. And that one is suitable. It does not identify Mobile as precisely where it should be bought.

As to it being a wornout Catholic hospital, that is not so. The VA's own study showed that it was a suitable hospital. And I happen to know. My first son happened to be born there. They have modernized that hospital. It was found by the VA itself to be perfectly suitable. It is not a rundown neighborhood, I assure you.

So all of those remarks, all of those terms are false. It is not rundown, it is not wornout, and we do need a hospital in that general area. And if we do need one we should not just build a new one, as he said, we should buy another one if it is suitable.

The individual stated that he had toured the hospital. The VA's own facilities people have looked at the hospital and have found it in condition suitable for VA use—not worn out, unless VA hospitals are worn out. And I think a good case can be made that many existing VA hospitals are in much worse shape than is Providence.

But more to the point, General, how can this committee and the Congress expect a comprehensive and fair study of the question when senior officials of the VA are taking positions in public like the one I have cited to you?

General TURNAGE. Senator Denton, while I do not know all the specifics about that particular one, but intend to, I am very conscious of some of the problems associated with the Sun Belt which I have also discussed with Senator DeConcini. I will be particularly sensitive to that and I will, in this instance, come back to you personally with regard to that particular hospital.

Senator DENTON. Well, may I invite you, sir, in view of the principle involved and in view of the specific step involved by the VA, to visit personally that hospital in Mobile, AL? And I would hope that if you will accept that invitation so that we could schedule our trip at an early date.

General TURNAGE. I will be delighted to do that, sir.

Senator DENTON. Thank you, sir.

Again, I just want to say that I believe that we have got to maximize the efficiency with which we address the needs of our veterans, and that includes especially the subject matter which we have been discussing. We have a monumental task of keeping up with our due commitment to our service-connected disabled and indigent veterans. And you are going to, again, have a very tough job which I intend to support you with.

And I hope that you will just take a look into the Providence Hospital situation.

General TURNAGE. Thank you.

Senator DENTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SPECTER [presiding]. Thank you very much, Senator Denton.

Senator Rockefeller.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROCKEFELLER

Senator ROCKEFELLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a statement which I will put in the record.[1] I just want to say that I look forward to supporting General Turnage.

I want to commend you, sir. I think you have an extraordinary and outstanding record. You made a marvelous commitment to this Nation by serving in World War II and the Korean war. And you continue to serve our country. I think you are going to be very good for the Veterans' Administration. I look forward to working with you.

It's a tough job, as Senator Denton just indicated, because of the budget situation. There is some division within the committee with respect to that. But there are some of us that do not want to see cuts occur. And yet, Gramm-Rudman is in effect. That makes life tough for all of us, and will for you.

But, personally, I am very pleased by the way that you have corresponded with committee members, including your colloquy through letters, so to speak, with Senator Cranston, and by your obvious commitment to serve veterans at a time when the population is getting older and more problems are coming up.

I certainly do support you. I'd like to make that very clear. And look forward to working with you.

I have some questions, but I will not submit them now, Mr. Chairman. I would rather do that in terms of a written letter to you, General. The questions have to do with a number of issues: One local, which has to do with the Huntington, WV, VA Medical Center. I am concerned with our State's lack of psychiatric care for veterans, suffering from the same kind of post-traumatic experience that affect many Vietnam vets around the country. I also have much interest in rural health care for veterans. Finally, I care a great deal about the emergency veterans' job training program and the effort by the Administrator to reduce or eliminate it.

But those are matters that I will take up with you by letter. And perhaps we will have a chance to talk about it.[2]

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[1] See p. 49.

[2] See p. 117.

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For the purpose of this hearing, I think you bring great distinction to this work and I look forward to serving with you, sir.

General TURNAGE. Senator Rockefeller, I look forward to meeting with you personally. I thank you very much for your very kind remarks.

Senator ROCKEFELLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you, Senator Rockefeller.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SPECTER

Senator SPECTER. General Turnage, I join in complimenting you on an outstanding record. I appreciate your having come to visit with me privately before the session today. And I, too, look forward to supporting you as you take on a very, very important job and a very difficult job, given the national commitments to the veterans and the limited resources which are available to the Veterans' Administration to carry out those responsibilities.

During my travels through Pennsylvania and the visitations I have made to many veterans' installations in Pennsylvania, I have seen the limited resources which are available to serve the needs of the veterans. And I would hope that you would be able to take a close look at the Administration and perhaps make some economies or efficiencies in administrative costs or in lines of expenditures which do not relate to the patient care.

Since the President has submitted his budget I have had a series of hearings in Pennsylvania, eight in all, and veterans' groups were represented at most of those hearings. And there is grave concern about cuts. And it really goes beyond concern. There is really a level of indignation and a level of anger that the veterans express really in a context, and understandably so, of the commitments to the veterans are really in the nature of obligations——.

General TURNAGE. Sure.

Senator SPECTER [continuing]. As opposed to grants or gifts which the Federal Government gives in so many, so many lives.

And my sense is that their attention is priority and that there ought not to be the cuts, that the veterans ought to have been excluded from Gramm-Rudman, if we have to make automatic cuts that the veterans have a special place. So that I would urge you to do whatever is possible where economies have to be made to have it in fields other than specific health care.

I would like to discuss with you for a few moments a specific case which illustrates the generalizations which I have just articulated. And this relates to a problem at the Coatesville Veterans' Administration Medical Center.

That is a major unit. It has a budget of $55 million a year. It had as of yesterday 835 in-house patients. They give service to some 55,000 visits per year. And I went there yesterday to get an update on it personally so that I would be in a position to discuss it with you today when your hearing was scheduled.

That is an installation which I have visited in the past. And it is a problemsome installation because of reports of patient abuse and because of some problems in the post-traumatic stress disorder unit which is a very important unit there at Coatesville and a very important kind of therapy of which there is too little in the country

generally to service veterans who suffer post-traumatic stress disorders.

When I had visited this installation in the past I had noted the limited resources available to take care of the enormous problems which were presented there and had made comments to your predecessors about that problem.

Since a visit that I made there on December 3, 1984, information came to my attention late last year about a nursing aide who admitted abusing four elderly patients. And in a contact with one of them broke the hip of a bedridden patient by the name of Mr. George Allen. And Mr. Allen subsequently died.

It is an open question as to whether there was any causal connection between the broken leg and the death of Mr. Allen. But that matter is now under investigation by the inspector general of the Veterans' Administration.

The incident occurred, as the facts have been reported to me, after the patient, Mr. George Allen, kicked the attendant, a man by the name of Robert Rommer, who has a good record otherwise, at a time when Mr. Rommer was changing Mr. Allen's urinary catheter. And the incident has the overtone of just too much work and too much tension, too much pressure. And it raises the issue of the adequacy of resources.

And this is an important enough unit, and I think that this is an important enough investigation that I would appreciate your taking a look at it personally.

There is another aspect of the pending investigation relating to patients who were being treated at the post-traumatic stress disorder unit. And there is a psychologist by the name of Dr. William Racek who has received accolades from many of the people whom he has treated in that post-traumatic stress disorder unit. He is a man whom I have met with on a number of occasions, including yesterday. And he has been removed from his assignment.

And I talked with the administrators at the center there, Dr. James L.G. Parsons, who appears to be a very competent man, very concerned, very dedicated; Dr. James C. Carson, his chief of staff, who again appears to be very concerned, very dedicated; and a new man, the Deputy Administrator, a man named Michael K. Wheeler, who again appears to be very competent and very devoted. So I draw no conclusions about any laxity on the part of the Administration.

When I talked to Dr. Racek he expressed concern about having been removed from his assignment for some 63 days when he was unable to render assistance to the patients who he says are so much in need. They had only five in-patients, and since reduced to three. And one of the in-patients who left was a man by the name of Tom Crompton, a World War II veteran, who is alleged to have been released before he should have been released. And it is alleged that he was released because he had turned over information which led to the investigation.

And some investigators came from the State official and compromised him as the source. And shortly thereafter he was released.

On what I have seen and on the visits that I have made there it is my conclusion that that post-traumatic disorder unit is a very important one. It is badly understaffed. It treats veterans who have

enormous problems. And I am told that about one-half of the 100 out-patients have since departed. And here we have Dr. Racek. And the supervisors there commented about Dr. Racek in the sense that he overworked, that he spent hours which were too long, and worked on Saturdays, worked on weekends.

And it is hard—It is not hard, it is impossible for me to draw any evaluation with the limited time and attention that I could personally devote to it. But my impressions are that Dr. Racek is an extraordinarily dedicated psychologist who really cares very deeply about the status of his patients. And I wonder if he has been appropriately removed from giving them care.

And I wonder about what is going to happen to the future of that unit. And I have a deeper concern that this is symptomatic about problems which exist all around this country in VA hospitals. Veterans there, to hear Dr. Racek talk about it, are angry, fearful, and distrustful. They do not have care and attention and concern.

And I worry about that hospital. And I worry about what is happening to veterans' care across the country.

Senator CRANSTON. Could I interrupt you?

Senator SPECTER. Sure.

Senator CRANSTON. May I interrupt?

The chairman desired to have action taken this morning when we had the appropriate number of people here. And Dennis DeConcini has to leave shortly.

So to accommodate the chairman's desire to move ahead today on the nomination, I am willing to proceed under certain conditions. Although I really would have preferred to have written answers to the questions and hear all the verbal answers this morning, and a chance to review the transcript, in view of the chairman's desire and the obvious situation that we have no opposition that I am aware of to the nomination and do have general support for it, I propose we agree that if the nomination is ordered favorably reported, as I am sure it will be, that you and I agree—and in effect you will be agreeing on behalf of the chairman—that it will not be called up in the Senate until the transcript of the hearing is back and we have a brief opportunity to review it, and until satisfactory answers are received to the written questions and we have an opportunity to review those answers.

I gather that, of course, would be acceptable to the chairman, and I trust to you?

Senator SPECTER. I am advised by counsel to the chairman that it would be acceptable. So on his representation on behalf of Senator Murkowski, the chairman, I agree.

Senator CRANSTON. Fine.

Well, then I move we go into executive session for the purposes of dealing with the nomination.

Senator SPECTER. So be it. We now move to executive session.

[Whereupon, at 10:40 a.m., the committee proceeded to consider the nomination.]

[Whereupon, at 10:42 a.m., the committee resumed the hearing.]

Senator DECONCINI. Mr. Chairman, now the test to see how long he stays around here to answer questions.

Senator SPECTER. Yes. [Laughter.]

General TURNAGE. I suppose my response is I am overwhelmed.

Senator CRANSTON. Don't fold up your papers. We are not done. [Laughter.]

Senator SPECTER. I thought Senator Cranston's interruption related to the merits of my pending soliloquy. I had not realized that he was going to interrupt my train of thought.

Senator CRANSTON. I hope you remember what you were doing.

Senator SPECTER. Not only today, but before today.

But as a result of the interruption, I have thought of some questions to ask you, General Turnage, on the subject. They are leading questions and obvious answers.

I take it you share the concerns that I have expressed generally about the administration of the veterans' centers and especially the one at Coatesville, which I have specified for you today.

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir; you know that Dr. Ditzler is dedicated to quality in those centers, more so when we find a specific instance, as you related. I have every confidence in the inspector general of the system, and I am sure that if he is not already, he will be looking into that specific case, and we will be back to you with the answers.

Senator SPECTER. Well, and that really comprehends the second question and that is your specific assurance that you would look into the issues which I have raised.

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir.

Senator SPECTER. I wrote to the inspector general yesterday. I wrote Inspector General Sato recounting what I had seen. I expressed some concern candidly, General, about the time lapse.

I wrote to the inspector general on December 19, and it was not until January 14 that the investigation was started. And I understand that Christmas intervened, but that is a little longer than I would have like to have seen, and we are 2 months beyond January 14. And Dr. Racek is in a state of suspended animation there, and I would ask you to do what you can to expedite the conclusion of the investigation and the questions which I have raised and the other questions which are present there.

General TURNAGE. Thank you, sir.

Senator SPECTER. General, I would ask you about one more line, and that is there are plans for expansion and construction of the veterans'—will there be order in the hearing room please?

There are plans for expansion of very sorely needed facilities at the veterans' hospital in Philadelphia, and I would ask if you have any specific knowledge of the plans and expansion there. And if not, if you would take a look at that and let me know as promptly as you can what your views are about implementing the plans because that facility has an enormous volume, and there are plans for expansion in the $117 million range. There have been some complications with the issue of a parking lot, and I would like to have your personal review of it and the assurances to whatever extent you can provide them for me that that matter will move forward.

General TURNAGE. I will be glad to look into it, sir. I am not familiar with the details, as you can appreciate.

Senator SPECTER. Sure.

General TURNAGE. But I will make it a matter of priority to do so.

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Senator SPECTER. All right. Thank you very much, General.

We have been joined by the distinguished assistant majority leader, the former illustrious chairman of this committee.

Senator SIMPSON. Yes, that's true. [Laughter.]

At this juncture we turn to him with the admonition that his comments today be serious.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SIMPSON

Senator SIMPSON. Well, thank you, Arlen.

I just wanted to come by. I met with General Turnage. As you and I both know, serving on the Veterans' Affairs Committee is a tough, tough situation that you head into, sir.

Since my service on this committee when Senator Cranston was chairman, and then during my chairmanship, and now during the able chairmanship of Senator Murkowski, I have watched with some great interest the pressure that comes to you in this job. You really are—you know, I admire you very much for your willingness to take it on.

It seems to me a thankless task in some ways—the pressures you get from the veterans' organizations, from internally within the Veterans' Administration, which is a powerhouse of a bureaucracy, often a competing bureaucracy. The Veterans' Administration competes within itself for money and more money.

And that, of course, brings us to Gramm-Rudman-Hollings and the fact we cannot do that kind of business as usual any more. And some of the things that I have been saying—and I do get a good tatoo of stuff upon me—would not be said if it were not for the fact we are headed for limited resources until we get this budget deficit under control.

And so, I have made comments about our first duty to the service-connected veteran, disabled veteran. I have made comments about our first duty toward the combat theater veteran, then the service-connected veteran within the—outside the theater of combat, and then finally, the non-service-connected veteran, disabled veteran, and then those who did not—through no choice of their own—did not serve overseas.

And you get accused in that process of putting a low priority on certain veterans, which is absurd in my mind. What you are talking about is common sense, if there is a limited pot to draw out of.

So, I guess I would just share with you and ask you, do you have any thoughts about that kind of thing? I know that is hazardous for you to—but I would inquire as to whether you see any kind of movement toward that which would never come, of course, in ordinary times, but I think is going to have to come if we get to sequestering and lopping budgets across the board and realizing what we have done to set aside the veterans' budget. We set aside their compensation. We set aside their pension. We set aside their cost-of-living allowance. People talk about the fact we couldn't get the cost of living allowance off Social Security, and so they do not know that often the Veterans' Administration—the COLA's are tied to that. And the veterans have chosen their lot to take it on a year-by-year basis, and they always do better there than if they were tied to an automatic increase. It is an interesting thing.

Well, I guess I will quit babbling and ask you if you have any thoughts on prioritizing in these special times?

General TURNAGE. Senator Simpson, I agree that it is in the interest of the veterans overall within this Nation to have positive action taken toward the solution to our economic problems that apparently exist. I think that all of us must realistically face the fact that there are going to have to be certain cutbacks across the board in the Government agencies in order to meet the objectives that have been established by the President if we are to have a balanced budget by 1991.

Having said that, I endorse completely what you said earlier and, further, in my judgment, there is no such thing as a low priority veteran. I think all who served and who served honorably for this country are entitled to the benefits, the compassion, the concern, and the understanding that we can attribute to them, and we should be taking care of him to the extent that we can within the resources that are available.

Now, having said that, I know that within our system we have—and it is either by congressional dictate, VA regulation, or it is in a resolution committee—identified certain people who are taken care of first, to include for example, the service-connected disabled veteran, the veteran who is over 65, the veteran who has been exposed to agent orange, or to radiation, the veteran who is a pensioner, and the veteran who cannot otherwise afford medical service. These people, obviously, in my judgment, have to be administered to in a precedence order if we are to meet the most sensitive needs of veterans across the board.

If we lived in a perfect world, we would not have these kinds of budgetary constraints, but understanding that we do, it seems to me then that those resources available must be used in the most judicious way. To the extent that I can do it, and within the framework of what I would call equity and fairness, the priorities I referred to earlier will establish the order in which we will accommodate the veteran.

Senator SIMPSON. Well, I thank you.

I might ask you, have you had an opportunity to look at the construction activities of the Veterans' Administration and priorities in there and how they allocate their resources?

General TURNAGE. I have not, sir. I have noted, however, that in the last 4 years there have been more funds spent for construction than there have been in any previous 4 years that I could find.

My purpose in looking into that was because in the new budget there has been a reduction in the construction funds, and I wanted to get a sensing about the relationship from the standpoint of priorities, the areas of the country, the types of construction, and the balance of it. I simply have not had the time to go into the detail that I should.

Senator SIMPSON. I will look forward to visiting with you after you have had that opportunity. I think that is worth pursuing. I have found that to be a jumble of activity, which really depends upon who is chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee in either the House or the Senate or who the members are, and of course, there is nothing new about that. But I think we ought to pursue

that in these times. When it was just good old business, why, it did not make much difference.

And then finally, I would just say to you that I have watched your predecessors, at least the ones I have personally come to know, Max Cleland, who I admired greatly, and Bob Nimmo, who fought in three wars for this country, and Max Cleland, who left parts of his anatomy in another country on behalf of this country. And they did not meet the test very well. They come at you pretty strong. Harry Walters got his share of it, and it will come to you. It looks to me like you are a good, strong gentleman, and a man of good humor and spirit. And you will need that, pal. I'll tell you that. [Laughter.]

And then one other thing I say, beware of the network, the network between the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees. It does not matter who is on the staff. I am not saying this—the minority or majority—and OMB and CBO—if you do not like the numbers you get, you shop around until you get the ones you want. It is the most amazing little outfit I have ever seen in my life. You just call somebody down at the VA, and they give you just the number you want. And you say, oh, God, that is not it. Can't you get closer?

So, you go to OMB or CBO or back here and bounce it back, and eventually you will find just exactly what you are looking for. It is very accommodating kind of relationship, the network.

And it works. And if it did not work, we would not be spending $27.5 billion on veterans while people are saying we are not doing anything for them.

So, thank you very much, and I believe I am going to leave all this to my wry, smiling colleague over there, Senator Cranston, because I must go back to my official duties. Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to ask a question or two. Good luck to you.

General TURNAGE. Thank you, sir.

Senator SIMPSON. I wish you the very best, indeed.

Senator CRANSTON. Alan, thank you very much. I wish you well in your duties today.

Senator SIMPSON. You want me to leave now, don't you?

Senator CRANSTON. I do have quite a few matters that I would like to explore with you. In my February 20 letter to you, I pointed out that after the submission of the President's budget for fiscal years 1982, 1983, 1985, and 1986, the administration without consulting with the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs proposed or supported budget revisions making deep cuts in VA programs.

In light of those experiences, I advised you that I would feel constrained to oppose your nomination unless the President provided assurances both that you will be fully involved and consulted while any major issue regarding the VA's budget is under executive branch consideration, and that the President will insist that before he or anyone acting for him makes a decision on that issue at any point, your views will be obtained and taken into account.

In your March 12 response to me you stated:

I intend to be fully involved not only in the development of initial budget requests within the Veterans' Administration, but also in the subsequent deliberations at the

Office of Management and Budget as the President's budget is being prepared for submission to Congress.

To allay any further concerns in this matter, you stated:

You should know that I have recently met with President Reagan and members of his staff, as well as Mr. Miller of OMB and members of his staff. In all instances, I received personal, explicit assurances that I will have every opportunity to present my view regarding policy decisions affecting the Nation's veterans and the resource needs of the Veterans' Administration. They could not have been more supportive.

You also said:

I will participate in every major aspect of the budget formulation and implementation, as well as all other activities which impact on the agency's ability to perform its mission.

Unfortunately, although your letter deals quite adequately with the issue of your involvement in budgetary issues prior to the submission of the President's budget to the Congress, it does not specifically address the concern I highlighted in my letter; namely, assurances regarding your participation in executive branch decisions regarding the VA's budget after it is submitted to Congress.

So, could you please clarify for us what the assurances you obtained from the President and OMB Director Miller included insofar as assurances are concerned that no post-budget-submission decisions will be made without your being involved and your views taken into account?

General TURNAGE. Senator, I do not know that I can be more explicit than I was in my response to you. Those were not guarded words, nor were they meant to be less than embracive of the whole concept that you suggest.

Anything that affects the formulation of the budget, anything that affects the subsequent decisions relating to it, and anything that affects the opportunity to change some of the decisions that were made which I would find to be antithetical to the interest of the veterans, I expect to be involved in.

Now, I have a track record for that, and I do not expect to change simply because I go the Veterans' Administration.

Senator CRANSTON. And you do believe the assurances extend to that area.

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir. I interpret it that way.

Senator CRANSTON. Fine.

General TURNAGE. And I have no concern about taking advantage of that opportunity if I feel it necessary.

I should hasten to say one other thing, however. In my military experience or in the Selective Service experience or in what I consider will be my experience with this agency, that does not mean—and I should not have it interpreted to mean—that I expect to get everything that I seek.

Senator CRANSTON. I understand that.

General TURNAGE. But at least where I have an opportunity to be the advocate for the veterans and the advocate for the system that represents them, I think that the important thing is that I am in that forum and I can express my views as forcefully as I know how.

Senator CRANSTON. Yes, I understand fully that you cannot expect to get everything you seek. We just want you to seek what you think should be sought. [Laughter.]

In my prehearing question No. 6, I noted that in a January 29 letter to me, Harry Walters said it was his responsibility, as Administrator, "to be the advocate for our Nation's 28 million veterans." And I ask for your thoughts on that characterization of the Administrator's role. You have already alluded to that in some ways in response to me just now.

In response at that time, you stated that, as Administrator, it would be your job to ensure that veterans' benefits "are made available efficiently and compassionately and that their legitimate entitlements are preserved and protected."

Your prepared statement this morning contains similar language.

Although you indicated in response to my prehearing question No. 1 that the Administrator has the responsibility to be an advocate, as Mr. Walters surely was for the Nation's veterans, you did not mention the concept of advocacy in your opening statement this morning.

Do you consider advocacy on behalf of veterans an important responsibility of the Administrator, and do you plan to perform as an advocate for veterans within the Administration and before the Congress?

General TURNAGE. Indeed. Not simply because I consider it to be either a statutory or another requirement, but morally and in spirit, I feel very comfortable with that position because, as they say, "I are one." I feel firmly that someone must defend their interests, and I am comfortable with that.

Let me suggest also, however, that it seems to me that in a country where there is an economy that meets the needs of all the people, and it achieves objectives which are in the interest of the country, inherent in that is the interest of the veteran also.

Senator CRANSTON. Now, I do want to get to a few questions that are a little bit tougher on the specifics of advocacy and the issues that confront us and will confront you.

The administration's fiscal year 1987 budget request for the VA's medical care account would, as you know, provide for 60,000 fewer episodes of inpatient care and over 1.1 million fewer outpatient visits in fiscal 1987 than in fiscal 1986. Compared to the medical care staffing level for which Congress appropriated funds in fiscal 1985 and 1986, approximately 194,000, which was also the approximate staffing level 1 month ago, according to Dr. Ditzler, the medical care staff would be reduced by nearly 9,000 staff years.

Do you believe that this proposal is fair to veterans?

General TURNAGE. In my comment earlier, I made the statement that I was not privy to, nor involved in, the preparation of this budget. It is so complicated, Senator, I have not been able to assess all of the details relating to it.

From the standpoint, however, of all that I have been told about it and the ability of Dr. Ditzler and his people to meet the quality requirements of the Nation's veterans in accordance with the precedents established not only by this body, the Congress, but also the regulations of the Veterans' Administration, I believe that can be done.

Senator CRANSTON. You believe what can be done?

General TURNAGE. I believe that quality care can still be afforded the veterans with the reduction in the staffing that has been suggested to me.

Now, that does not mean that once I get there, I am not going to have a reason to look into that in great detail. Simply, the amount of time that has been available to me up to now, however, I cannot give you a better answer to that question.

Senator CRANSTON. Well, since you have not really been able to familiarize yourself with all those details, I would like to ask that you proceed to do so now, and report back to us your views on that specific matter, because I have grave questions about the capacity to provide the sort of medical care we want to provide if that kind of a cut is made.

General TURNAGE. All right, sir.

Senator CRANSTON. When would you be able to respond on that, do you think?

General TURNAGE. Early on as a matter of fact. As soon as I get a complete list of the questions that are asked me, I will get the responses back immediately.

Senator CRANSTON. Fine. Well, that particular——

General TURNAGE. I think the experience shows that, sir.

Senator CRANSTON. Yes. You have been responding swiftly, although this particular matter requires a good deal of thought and examination, I think, before you can respond to that one. So, I would not expect an immediate answer to that question.

The projections for fiscal years 1988 through 1991 in the VA's budget documents show a continuing decline in this administration's support for VA health care and medical research. The number of medical care staff years would decline by an annual average over 3,000, falling to about 172,000 in fiscal year 1991, which would be about 22,000 less than the current level. From fiscal 1986 through 1991, the number of hospital patients treated per year would decline by 133,000, and the annual number of outpatient visits would decrease by a huge number, 2 million. VA research staffing levels would decline by 520 staff years or 12 percent from fiscal 1986 to 1991.

Now, what is your view on these proposals for drastic reductions in VA health care and research, and what actions might we expect you to take in regard to that?

General TURNAGE. Once again, with regard to the specifics of it, I would like to answer for the record. However, there are some other aspects of it that I think are important, as I understand it, based on some of the information that was provided me in conferences that I have had.

Because of the age of the veterans involved, as we project it on and on, and particularly the numbers over age 65, there will be a greater requirement for utilization of nursing homes and community—and domiciliaries and community type homes and for State homes, which would then—if these people are put into that kind of support organization, reduce the number of staff in the 172 medical centers. In some cases I know that there are provisions for considering changing the mission in some of the veterans' medical centers, which would accommodate additional nursing capacity.

[Subsequently, the Veterans' Administration furnished the following information:]

The Medical Care budget for the planning period 1988 through 1991 continues the management initiatives and program reforms contained in the 1987 budget—productivity is increased annually, workload and employment are reduced with emphasis on the care of veterans with the highest priority status, new facilities are funded for activation costs, and workload is shifted from acute hospital to long term care modalities in line with the projected needs of the aging veteran.

The program balance and staff-to-workload ratios maintained in the planning period will allow the highest quality of care to be provided and the recently enacted Consolidated Budget Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985 contains a revised means test which will provide the VA with the ability to insure that the reduced workload levels can be achieved without effect on service-connected or needy veterans.

The Medical and Prosthetic Research budget for the planning period provides straight-lined dollars after adjusting for the requirements of the CDC epidemiology study. That constant level, $185,465,000, provides full current services funding for Rehabilitation Research and Health Services Research and projects only minimal reductions in Medical Research. In fact, no research project will be terminated prematurely. Rather, as projects are completed certain of them—those in areas of lowest priority to veterans—will not be replaced with new projects.

Senator CRANSTON. The VA's Chief Medical Director consistently stresses to us that, with the rising age in the population of veterans, not only long-term but acute care becomes more and more important. And these kinds of cuts can impinge upon our capacity to give that acute care.

General TURNAGE. I recognize the——

Senator CRANSTON. I beg your pardon?

General TURNAGE. May I please inject one other thing?

Senator CRANSTON. Yes.

General TURNAGE. In my role as the Veterans' Administrator I have the responsibility, as I said earlier, to be an advocate of the veteran. After having had an opportunity to review these long-range projections into 1991 and beyond, I will have an opportunity to impact on the direction that goes. Please be mindful, I have had none of that interaction so far.

Senator CRANSTON. Yes. I understand that. I recognize that these issues are not easy to come to grips with since they relate to decisions made by an administration before you became a part of it. It is not easy for you to at once start differing with them, but, on the other hand, as an advocate of veterans you do have the responsibility to do what you can to see to it that we are going to provide the services and facilities that they need. And I do count on your taking a real new, fresh, hard look at these issues and familiarizing yourself with them, and then advocating what you decide needs to be advocated.

One example of this sort of a situation follows. In a March 14 letter to Senator Max Baucus of Montana regarding his concerns about the Miles City, Montana, VA Hospital, you stated, "As in the past, once a veteran is determined eligible for VA care, it is our responsibility to provide for all of his needs associated with the episode, including any transportation cost."

How does that statement square with the administration's proposal to cut funding for beneficiary travel by $93 and a half million to just $10 million by eliminating reimbursement to service-connected disabled veterans and financially needy veterans except for emergency travel by special mode?

General TURNAGE. Once again, knowing the sensitivity of that particular issue, I will want to know more about it. I know some about it already.

For example, I am told that the $10 million is to be reserved in effect for critical type care——

Senator CRANSTON. And special mode type travel.

General TURNAGE. Yes, and for helicopter type activities, for emergencies that are, in effect, priority lifesaving events.

I was also told, sir, that over 50 percent of the claims against the beneficiary travel account that have occurred up to this time were for amounts of $5 and less. If that is so, it seems to me, simply understanding some of the machinations of the bureaucracy, that is not a cost effective way to use those kinds of funds. And it seems to me that should be considered in the ultimate determination of whether or not we should ask for more expansion of that program.

And I am mindful of your letter to the budget committee relating to an increase in the funds for this particular area. But I simply, once again, need to know more about it. The fact is, if we can by better management procedures improve that program and use funds that are gained from it for better health care, it seems to me that should be the kind of priority in which we are interested.

[Subsequently, the Veterans' Administration furnished the following additional information:]

The reduction in the beneficiary travel account is intended to permit maximum medical care resources to be available for patient care. In accordance with the Administration's goal of reducing the Federal deficit, the Veterans' Administration has been asked to identify those programs that are tangential to the primary purpose of providing medical services to eligible beneficiaries. The payment of rountine beneficiary travel allowances, other than the payment of special emergency transportation, is not seen as being central to the mission of the Department of Medicine and Surgery.

Senator CRANSTON. Well, if we can save some money in what is expended on transportation in a legitimate, fair way, fine. But you did say, as recently as March 14, in your letter to Max Baucus that we should cover all the veterans' needs associated with an episode of medical care, including any transportation costs. Now, that's a pretty clear-cut statement.

General TURNAGE. Well, you must understand that in the last few days, I have written a number of letters and I have answered a lot of questions. And in some cases, I put a caveat in where I expressed it very clearly that after I have more information, some of these things may change in degree, but not from the standpoint of philosophy.

Senator CRANSTON. We will have to see how that works out.

General TURNAGE. OK.

Senator CRANSTON. I will be submitting some written questions on the needs of Vietnam veterans, radiation-exposed veterans and ex-POW's.[1] I will not get into that now.

In my prehearing question No. 13, I advised you that just last year, the administration had prohibited the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs from appearing before a House Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing. And I asked if you would seek assurances that

[1] See p. 98.

neither the President nor any other administration official would stop you from making such appearances.

In your response, you stated that since you had not been prevented from appearing before any congressional committees during the past 4 years, you did not feel it was necessary to seek those assurances.

In my view, the experience of the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs just 5 months ago is much more relevant to this issue than is your experience as Director of Selective Service. I do not think you deal with the kind of issues in the Selective Service System that the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs faces pretty constantly.

Based on your meetings with the President and OMB Director Miller, do you believe that you have reached an understanding with them such that you will be able to testify, your schedule permitting, of course, when requested to do so by this committee or by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs?

General TURNAGE. I see no problem with that whatsoever, Senator.

Senator CRANSTON. In response to my prehearing question 7, you stated that your feeling is that the expectation of veterans' benefits enhances the desirability of a military career. Given this feeling, have you a view on the effectiveness of the new GI bill in terms of its recruitment and retention value, including not only for the active duty forces but, in light of your extensive experience regarding the Reserve Forces, for the Reserve and the National Guard?

General TURNAGE. I think there are many variables which go into the crucible of determination of why an individual serves. I think one of those variables which give me great comfort these days, as I have discerned in the last few years, has been a return to the patriotic motive as one of the reasons to join. A second is for income. A third is for care for dependents. A fourth is for the ability to learn a job trade or skill.

Surely, in some cases, the educational and other benefits that would accrue to a veteran's status after leaving the service must be motivative factors for some people.

To the degree that that exists, I cannot say, sir, excepting as opposed to simply the GI bill per se. As far as I can recall, there have been other kinds of options available to include the VEAP, which were in vogue when I was in the Pentagon before I left the service.

So the degree to which one is more profound than another in order to provide that motivation, I think becomes relatively subjective, or at least I have no statistics that would be meaningful to you.

Senator CRANSTON. Would you take a look at the Reserve and National Guard aspect of that and get back to us with your thoughts on that?

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir, I will.

Senator CRANSTON. Thank you.

[Subsequently, the Veterans' Administration furnished the following information:]

There are a number of factors that go into a person's determination to enter the National Guard and the Reserve. One of these factors is the availability of education benefits to the individual. It is too early to tell how many new National Guard or Reserve members have been attracted to service because of the new G.I. Bill.

From Department of Defense figures, we do know that in the first quarter of 1985, the National Guard and the Reserve had 17,802 accessions. This compares with 27,540 accessions in the first quarter of 1986. This represents an approximate 55 percent increase in overall accessions from the first quarter of 1985 to the first quarter of 1986.

Senator CRANSTON. With respect to prehearing question 11 regarding the establishment of a new national cemetery in northern California, I am very concerned that the cemetery is not scheduled to open until fiscal 1991. I would like to ask that you review the timetable for that cemetary and make a judgment as to whether it could be expedited, perhaps by carrying out some of the steps concurrently, and let me know your views on that for the record if you would.

General TURNAGE. Senator, let me share something with you besides for the record if I may, or before I respond otherwise.

Senator CRANSTON. Fine.

General TURNAGE. I want to deal with you and all others on this committee in complete candor.

When we were preparing that response to your question and we received that information from the Veterans' Administration, I commented to my chief of staff, "What is wrong with trying to generate more action in getting the completion of the thing before 1991."

Now, I must tell you I am not expert in the preparation of cemeteries, but I am going to be. It seems to me that it is reasonable to expect that cemetery would be open some time prior to 1991.

Senator CRANSTON. Very good.

General TURNAGE. I know this was a decision that was made by Mr. Walters, if I recall, about last August. And I think the thing is in the mill now.

Senator CRANSTON. Well, I deeply appreciate that and I know the California veterans would be very grateful if that can actually be done, and they will appreciate your intent.

With respect to prehearing question 10 regarding the Administration proposal to sell off certain lands at two VA medical centers in southern California, I want, first, to thank you for reviewing that matter and for your responsiveness in regard to it. I do, however, have a few questions about it.

First, you stated:

If it is determined, based upon current information, that some of that land is needed for future VA needs, then we obviously will want to take another look at the surplus proposal.

Who are you referring to by the word "we"?

General TURNAGE. Veterans' Administration. It is my understanding that a review of this was originally started by the GSA in 1983, Senator. I understand that their proposal came back in the early part of this year to the Veterans' Administration, and I understand that Mr. Alvarez, as a result of having received that, sent a letter to this committee stating his intent to declare certain parcel surplus.

We have discussed it since in some detail. I am familiar with that land generally, because of having come from that area. But specifics, I do not know. However, I understand that someone will be going and taking another look at that property.

I should say further that I am philosophically supportive of the President's initiative to get rid of surplus land if in fact that land is surplus to the needs of the agency which holds it.

On the other hand, if there is a projected need and a requirement that the land be used for a specific purpose, as I understand this was deeded to the Veterans' Administration for purposes that it is currently used, then it seems to me it should be retained and used for that purpose.

Other than that, I cannot relate about this specific property.

Senator CRANSTON. There is also a separate issue about letting present open land be used for commercial purposes. You are familiar with that part of the community of Los Angeles, and you know the problems that relate there to overdevelopment, traffic, and many other difficulties that have to be considered.

General TURNAGE. Yes.

Senator CRANSTON. Those are separate from the VA's responsibilities but, nonetheless, they are factors to be considered.

According to internal VA documents, the decision that these lands would be declared excess and sold off was forced on the VA by OMB in connection with fiscal 1987 budget decisions, and was not a decision by either the Administrator or the Acting Administrator. Are you aware of that?

General TURNAGE. I am not privy to that, sir.

Senator CRANSTON. Well, that seems to be the case.

Generally, under section 304a of title 40, United States Code, Federal land may be sold by GSA if either the agency had or the President determines it to be excess to the agency's needs.

In the case of VA land, however, under section 5022(d) of title 38, the Administrator has a special responsibility with respect to excessing VA land. Specifically, VA land may not be declared excess and disposed of by GSA unless the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs determines that the property is no longer needed by the VA in carrying out its functions.

Thus, Congress has expressly determined that excessing of VA land is up to the VA Administrator, namely, shortly, you, not OMB or GSA.

If confirmed, will you carry out this responsibility under section 5022(d) to make the decision on your own with respect to all questions of excessing VA land, independent of directions you may receive from OMB, GSA, or the White House staff?

General TURNAGE. That is all inclusive, Senator, because if I were to take action with regard to any piece or parcel of land, I would not only want to discuss it with those agencies, but I would want to discuss it with this committee, with the House committee, with the people who were in that area and had responsibilities or interest in it, and maybe the veterans' organizations who may well also have an interest in it.

I think that communication here is a very important issue, and I would not want to preclude a communication with any one agency of the government.

Senator CRANSTON. No, we are not at all concerned about who you consult with. Obviously, you would want to consult broadly. But basically the law gives you the decision.

General TURNAGE. Well, then, I would accept it.

Senator CRANSTON. You would accept the responsibility——

General TURNAGE. I would take the——

Senator CRANSTON [continuing]. To make that decision.

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir.

Senator CRANSTON. More specifically, will you agree to make your own independent judgment regarding the two southern California land proposals after you get the results of the new reviews now being made by the VA, and to communicate that decision to me and to the authorizing committees in a timely fashion?

General TURNAGE. I would be pleased to do that, sir.

Senator CRANSTON. Thank you.

Finally on the land question, in your written answer, you referred to a possible future determination based on a new review that some of the land may be needed for the VA's future needs. I assume it is possible that you might determine that all of the land is needed for that purpose. Am I correct that you have not predetermined that some of it must be excessed?

General TURNAGE. Sir, you heard all that I know about that land already. So I have no preconceived notion about it really.

Senator CRANSTON. Fine.

I presume you are aware, or should be aware there is also a real legal question about it. The land was deeded for use by veterans, and the heirs of those who deeded the land to the Government for veterans' purposes are preparing to bring suits if it is used for some other purpose. So there is a cloud over the Government's title in any case.

What is your view of the role of the VA inspector general and the relationship between the inspector general and the Administrator?

General TURNAGE. I know that the inspector general is most effective when he is independent, and I think that that is statutorily provided for. More than that, I have no issue with it, and I would give him complete rein to perform those jobs and missions that he thinks are important in the interest of the system.

Moreover, not only those that he thinks are important but in those areas I find need special interest, I would ask for his assistance. We have already discussed this relationship. I am completely comfortable with the one he expressed that existed with Mr. Walters, and I am confident I can work with Mr. Sato in the same way.

I read his report for the last 6-month period, which he is required to submit to the Congress. I was impressed with the professionalness of it and the detail that was provided. I have no concern about my relationship with him.

Senator CRANSTON. You and he have met, have you, to discuss this?

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir, we have.

Senator CRANSTON. Did you discuss his independent status under the Inspector General Act under which it is established that the IG may not be prevented by the head of an agency from carrying out any audit or investigation and reporting directly to the Congress on a semiannual basis?

General TURNAGE. We did so explicitly, sir.

Senator CRANSTON. I trust you would agree that it could happen, despite all your best efforts, presuming your confirmation as Ad-

ministrator, that you or others acting on your behalf might approve a regulation that exceeded the VA's lawful authority or might make a claims adjudication decision contrary to law or lacking a rational basis on the evidence.

Now, I know you do not want that to happen, but I assume you will agree that it could happen.

General TURNAGE. Well, let me endorse the way you suggested it. I would not want it to happen.

Senator CRANSTON. No.

General TURNAGE. And I would expect with the competence of the counsel we have available to us, it would not.

If it did, we would certainly have a session.

Senator CRANSTON. Well, we do not want it to happen; we do not expect it to happen; but it could happen. As we both agree, the possibility of that happening exists—that a VA regulation could be issued beyond lawful authority or the Board of Veterans' Appeals could decide a case in a way unsupported by the facts or contrary to law.

In such a case, do you believe that a veteran adversely affected by such a decision should have no recourse in such a situation as at present, and that the lawfulness of your actions as Administrator and of those actions for you in claims matters should be above scrutiny in a court of law, a scrutiny to which Cabinet Secretaries and heads of other independent agencies all are presently subjected?

General TURNAGE. I would not want that recourse to go to a court of law, Senator Cranston. There are a number of reasons for that.

First of all, the Veterans' Administration itself is not in an adversarial relationship with the veteran. It is our job to look after his interests. And based on the briefings that I have had so far in those relationships, I believe the benefit of the doubt goes to the veteran. After having discussed it with the representative of the Veterans Appeal Board and reviewing their actions and their track record and the statistics relating to their findings in the interest of the veterans over a period of time, I believe that is the case.

I believe going to court actions would simply result in greater expense, longer time, greater frustrations, and an adversarial relationship that would not be productive for either party.

Senator CRANSTON. I am not going to pursue that further today, but we are in disagreement on that particular point. And I believe the unanimous view of this committee is different from what you express. So that is an issue we should explore and get you take another look at——

General TURNAGE. All right, sir.

Senator CRANSTON [continuing]. In the course of time.

I just have two last questions relating to travel. According to figures complied by the General Accounting Office during fiscal years 1982 through 1985, you made 129 official trips for 528 days at a cost of almost $88,000 for you and aides traveling with you.

Could you tell us why, insofar as the duties of your current job are concerned, you spent 36 percent of your time traveling, and whether you anticipate traveling any similar proportion of your time, if confirmed as Administrator?

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir, I think I can do that quite clearly.

As the Director of Selective Service System, I am dealing with a new population every day. Five thousand young men turn 18 each day. At the outset of the system, when registration was restarted back in 1980, there was enough controversy associated with it and whether or not it would be continued and whether or not there would be dissent in some manifest way that the headlines in the papers themselves served to be a catalyst to have our message told—that young men are supposed to register when they reach age 18.

As time has passed and we achieved the level of compliance that we currently have, we almost have to generate our own activities to make people aware of what is going on and let people know what, in effect, Congress has done for us relating to the Solomon amendment, relating to the Thurmond amendment, and relating to other support we have received from States as well as the Federal Government in championing the cause of having registration prerequisite to eligibility for Government and State benefits.

Now, in order to get young men aware of that, we have gone to 24 of the 25 top newspapers in the country and had editorial board meetings where we have clarified issues with them. We have met with segments of our infrastructure throughout the country, which includes 11,000 board members, 728 Reserve and National Guard officers; an interface with the adjutants general of every State and territory; and others. Moreover, we have visited every major city in the country.

As a matter of fact, if I made a mistake, Senator Cranston, it was of being concerned about the sensitivity to trips to California. The point being that of the top 10 cities in noncompliance in the country, 6 of them are in California. Perhaps I did not go there enough and get involved enough to point out that this is a requirement of the law.

Additionally, we have met with State legislatures, we have met with newspapers, we have met with board members, we have made speeches, we have met all kinds of different entities that would sell our program. The success of it is manifest in the fact that of all the young men who are draft-eligible, 98 percent of them are now registered, sir.

Senator CRANSTON. That is a very effective record. I guess what you said about California explains why 54 percent of your total travel days were to California?

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir.

Senator CRANSTON. Do you anticipate you will be traveling to any such degree in your new role?

General TURNAGE. I am sure that when the fact that in the Director of Veterans' Benefits there are some 57 regions; as I understand it, we have 172 hospitals, we have overall over 400 installations throughout the country, I am sure that travel is going to be one of the requirements associated with it.

I am just as sure, however, that in the early weeks of this exposure, that travel is probably going to be cut down because I am going to try to be finding out what is going on within the house.

Senator CRANSTON. The real point to my question I think is that obviously there is a need to travel.

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir.

Senator CRANSTON. We also need a full-time Administrator here and available working on all sorts of immense problems here. I suspect you may find that you will not travel quite as much in this role as you did.

General TURNAGE. Part of my job sir, is to have competent people, and if I am successful in this job, it is going to be because of people who will be able to work with me and during my absence, as well.

Senator CRANSTON. Right.

General TURNAGE. I do not expect to have any lapse in continuity at any time.

Senator CRANSTON. Good. One final thing: Can you tell me the status of the answers to the remaining 21 unanswered questions that I submitted in connection with our February 20 VA budget hearing?

General TURNAGE. Yes, sir. As of this morning, or as of approximately 5:30 or 5:45 last night, I talked with Mr. Alvarez about those. He had those questions and he is still coordinating the responses to those questions in conjunction with the Office of Management and Budget, and expects to have them to you very shortly.

We hoped to have them before this meeting this morning. It was simply a matter of functional turnaround, however.

Senator CRANSTON. Well, with whatever questions are now leftover, obviously based on our action today, the sooner you get them up, the sooner we get action on your nomination.

General TURNAGE. I am inspired to do that, sir. [Laughter.]

Senator CRANSTON. I thought you would be and I thank you very much.

General TURNAGE. Thank you.

Senator CRANSTON. Some service organizations are going to testify. If they would now come forward.

We thank you very much, Tom.

We're now going to hear from E. Philip Riggin, director, National Legislative Commission, accompanied by Robert E. Lyngh, director, National Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, The American Legion; James N. Magill, national legislative director, Veterans of Foreign Wars; John F. Heilman, national legislative director, Disabled American Veterans; David J. Passamaneck, national legislative director, AMVETS; Frank R. DeGeorge, associate legislative director, Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Tony Principi is going to have to preside in the absence of Chairman Murkowski because I have a commitment that requires me to leave. I believe Chairman Murkowski will be here shortly.

STATEMENT OF E. PHILIP RIGGIN, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

Mr. RIGGIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The American Legion is pleased to be here today. This has been a rather extensive and exhausting hearing thus far.

With me this morning, as you—as Senator Cranston has already indicated, I have Bob Lyngh, who is the director of our Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation Division. Bob is prepared to summarize

our prepared statement and with the request that that full statement be part of the permanent record of this hearing.

We will happily respond to whatever questions you may have following the statement.

Mr. PRINCIPI. Mr. Lyngh.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT E. LYNGH, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

Mr. LYNGH. Mr. Chairman, historically and as a matter of policy it has not been the practice of the American Legion to recommend, endorse or oppose the nominations put forward by the President for senior positions in the administration. The reason for this policy is that our organization believes that it is essential to its mission to maintain its freedom of action in its dealings with the Federal Government. It has always maintained a dialog with the Administrator but feels it is necessary to be completely free to disagree with policies or decision enunciated by the Administrator when these are not, in its judgment, in the best interest of the Nation's veterans.

At the same time, we wish to say that it has also been the consistent policy of the Legion that the President of the United States has and should have the prerogative of appointing officers of Government in whom he has confidence. That is certainly true in the case of the Administrator. And we wish to assure the committee and the President's nominee that if confirmed by the Senate the American Legion will work with him in the most cooperative manner to serve the needs of veterans and their families.

At this juncture we would like to make the passing observation that it continues to be the belief of the American Legion that the Veterans' Administration should by rights be a regular department of the executive branch and the Administrator should be a member of the President's Cabinet.

Let us proceed to mention, if we may, Mr. Chairman, one other most serious concern the Legion has as to the place the Administrator will occupy among the President's senior officers and advisers. We feel most strongly the Administrator needs to have the assurance that in carrying out those veterans' programs mandated by law he has access to the President directly when necessary.

The necessary times in our judgment relate most directly to the preparation of the President's budget, the presentation of major issues or problems that may confront the veteran population, and where there may be differences of opinion among Government departments as to priorities for allocation of resources.

Absent this assurance and at a time when there is heavy competition for scarce resources and because the Veterans' Administration is not a regular department of the executive branch there is a real danger that veterans will not be treated fairly in the setting of priorities and the allocation of those resources.

The amount of money spent on veterans today is a reducing percentage of all Federal expenditures. It is a debt of honor, and it is money well spent. The compassion and concern manifested by the American people is one major reason why its young men and

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women do respond when they are called to national service. This is the American way. It has served our republic well for more than 200 years and through repeated wars and campaigns. It represents an unwritten pact between the Government and the people. It is the lifeblood of the continued existence of this Nation.

The American Legion looks forward to working with the new Administrator. It pledges to him the same cooperation and assistance it has provided his predecessors. Once more we thank the committee for this opportunity.

Mr. PRINCIPI. Thank you, Mr. Lyngh.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Riggin and Mr. Lyngh appears on p. 51.]

Mr. PRINCIPI. Mr. Magill.

STATEMENT OF JAMES N. MAGILL, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MAGILL. Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the VFW with respect to Gen. Thomas K. Turnage being nominated as Administrator of Veterans' Affairs.

General Turnage, as we all know, has had a long and distinguished military career. And because of this he certainly does know the sacrifices made by our Nation's veterans in serving their country.

It is our contention that the Administrator must truly believe that veterans constitute a special segment of our population deserving special consideration from a grateful nation. And I would like to point out that we were pleased to hear that it appears General Turnage does believe this.

The VFW will support General Turnage as the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs as long as he is a strong and effective veterans' advocate. We hope that this confirmation will be brought to the Senate floor very soon because we do believe that it is important that the Administrator be in place with respect to the trying times that are before the Veterans' Administration coming up and the Nation itself.

We wish General Turnage well and look forward to a good working relationship with him which is beneficial to veterans of all wars.

This concludes my statement.

Mr. PRINCIPI. Thank you, Mr. Magill.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Magill appears on p. 60.]

Mr. PRINCIPI. Mr. Heilman.

STATEMENT OF JOHN F. HEILMAN, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Mr. HEILMAN. Yes, sir. Good morning, Mr. Counsel.

First of all I would like to note my appreciation for having the unique experience to witness an Executive Committee session. Did I have that experience this morning?

Very nice.

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Also, for the record I do want to congratulate General Turnage on the fact that apparently his nomination will be favorably and unanimously reported by the committee.

My statement has been submitted, Mr. Counsel, and I know it will appear verbatim in the record. And as you know, that statement dealt with how we felt General Turnage, or anyone nominated for the position of Administrator, should act in that job. And this morning I heard assurances from the General on many of the concerns that we addressed in our statement.

He brings, obviously, proven managerial skills with him to the agency. He is obviously highly qualified and has had a distinguished career of public service to his country. We in the DAV will support him strongly. And we will be critical of him when we feel such criticism is warranted in terms of the delivery of benefits and services administered by the VA.

I want to make one note. I think I recall the General indicating that he would be looking at the fiscal year 1987 VA budget request, he indicated that he was not involved in the process in terms of formulation of that budget request. For the record and for those on the VA staff who are here, I would just encourage the general not just to look at the passback that was received from OMB in terms of the fiscal year 1987 budget, but I would urge the general to thoroughly review all the documentation that led up to the budget being submitted to OMB in terms of getting a true picture on what the agency really needs and what the administration is proposing.

Thank you.

Mr. PRINCIPI. Thank you, Mr. Heilman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Heilman appears on p. 64.]

Mr. PRINCIPI. Colonel Passamaneck.

STATEMENT OF LT. COL. DAVID J. PASSAMANECK, U.S. ARMY (RET.), NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, AMVETS

Colonel PASSAMANECK. Thank you, Mr. Chief Counsel.

I would like to note—well, first of all I would like to request that the prepared statement of our executive director, Mr. Morgan Ruph, who unfortunately could not be here today, be attached to the record of these proceedings.

Mr. PRINCIPI. It will be made a permanent part of the record as if read.

Colonel PASSAMANECK. I would like to note that the hour is 11:40 a.m. We have been in this session here since 9:30. All of the members of the committee have left the room. The nominee, General Turnage, and his immediate staff have left the room. I note Mr. Alvarez is still here, fortunately.

I had hoped that the remarks that we were going to deliver on this nomination would be at least heard by the nominee, if not by all the members of the committee. It is understandable that they cannot all be here.

It is unfortunate that I, and my colleagues for that matter, are being placed in the position, as we often are, not only before this committee but also sometimes over on the House side, of talking to the staff and not to the people who actually are going to do the voting.

It is also unfortunate in this particular instance with this executive session having taken place before the veterans' organizations testified, and that apparently our views were not considered by the members of the committee in voting on this nomination.

Now, having said that, I would like to add that of course we support the nomination of General Turnage. We wish him well in facing the challenge which will require even more courage and dedication than he has demonstrated in wartime service. A man with his outstanding credentials can afford to stand on his own principles and fight for what is right, regardless of the personal consequences. We expect no less of him.

Thank you.

Mr. PRINCIPI. Thank you, Colonel Passamaneck.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ruph appears on p. 70.]

Mr. PRINCIPI. Let me state for the record that I, and I'm sure my counterpart, Mr. Steinberg, share the frustrations and the difficulties associated with conducting hearings when our members are required to be at five or six places at every single moment of the day, in a Foreign Relations markup and an Energy Committee markup, that they cannot be present.

Although it is sometimes pleasing to serve in the chairman's stead, I do regret the fact that the chairman and some of the other members could not be here.

However, I can assure you, Colonel, that every statement was read, was summarized for all the members, and that your views were taken into consideration. And none of the service organizations opposed the nomination of General Turnage to be the new Administrator of Veterans' Affairs.

Had there been any opposition we would not have deviated from the normal procedure. We did deviate from the normal procedure because of your utmost concern that the nominee be confirmed as soon as possible, given the enormous decisions that must be made with regard to the VA's budget for fiscal year 1987.

And in view of getting the appropriate quorum which is required under Senate and committee rules, we felt it was important to do so. And that was the only reason that I and my counterpart had recommended to the chairman and ranking minority member that we deviate this morning.

So I do apoligize. But I do hope you understand the reasons for our decision.

Thank you.

Colonel PASSAMANECK. If I may say, sir, I certainly understand the situation with respect to members of the committee. I do not understand why the nominee did not stay in this room for the rest of the testimony.

Mr. PRINCIPI. Thank you very, very much.

Mr. DeGeorge, Paralyzed Veterans.

STATEMENT OF FRANK R. DeGEORGE, ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

Mr. DEGEORGE. Thank you, Mr. Principi and Mr. Steinberg.

PVA is privileged and honored to be made part of this nomination process here today. We want to go on record to state that we

were also honored by the tenure of service from VA past-Administrator Harry Walters and his Deputy Everett Alvarez.

We also want to go on record as stating and welcoming Major General Turnage in his new position. We welcome and look forward to working with him in the future. And there will be plenty of opportunity for that, I am sure.

I also want to go on record on behalf of PVA to urge one more time and support the committee's efforts to elevate the position of VA Administrator to Cabinet-level status.

And I also want to say thank you for the opportunity here today. We submit for the record.

Thank you.

Mr. PRINCIPI. Thank you, Mr. DeGeorge.

[The prepared statement of Mr. DeGeorge appears on p. 73.]

Mr. PRINCIPI. I thank all of the witnesses for summarizing their testimony.

In conclusion, we will have the transcript of the nomination hearing available tomorrow. We will send it to General Turnage and his chief-of-staff for review so that we can expedite the nomination. That will be available here in the hearing room if any of the witnesses, service organizations wish to review it or if we can be of any assistance with regard to answers to the questions.

Again, I apologize for the situation.

And with that we will adjourn. Thank you very, very much.

[Whereupon, at 11:45 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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APPENDIX

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI, ALASKA, CHAIRMAN
ALAN K. SIMPSON, WYOMING
STROM THURMOND, SOUTH CAROLINA
ROBERT T. STAFFORD, VERMONT
ARLEN SPECTER, PENNSYLVANIA
ALFONSE D'AMATO, NEW YORK
JOHN H. CHAFEE, RHODE ISLAND
ALAN CRANSTON, CALIFORNIA
SPARK M. MATSUNAGA, HAWAII
DENNIS DECONCINI, ARIZONA
GEORGE J. MITCHELL, MAINE
JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV, WEST VIRGINIA
ANTHONY J. PRINCIPI, CHIEF COUNSEL/STAFF DIRECTOR
JONATHAN E. STEVENSON, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL/
STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 20, 1986

Honorable Thomas K. Turnage
Administrator of Veterans' Affairs-Designate
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Tom,

I am writing in order to communicate directly with you regarding a position that I will take with regard to your nomination to be Administrator of Veterans' Affairs.

Before discussing the specifics, however, I first want to give you my full and personal assurance that this position is not intended to reflect any judgment regarding your personal or professional qualifications for the position. Rather, it is purely the result of events in recent years that have adversely affected the budget of the Veterans' Administration.

After the submission of the President's budget for fiscal years 1982, 1983, 1985, and 1986, the Administration, without consulting with the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, proposed or supported budget revisions making deep cuts in VA programs. In anticipation of the possibility that the Director of the Office of Management and Budget or White House staff members might exercise such undue control over the VA budget, I sought and obtained, during this Committee's consideration of your two predecessors' nominations, certain assurances with respect to their personal access to the President or his top White House advisors regarding VA budget matters.

In retrospect, however, it is clear that nothing less than the specific personal assurances of the President himself can provide any guarantee that the Administrator will be consulted and his views taken into account before Administration positions on the VA's budget are taken.

Thus, in light of the repeated frustration of past efforts to ensure that the Administrator has appropriate opportunities to play an active role in all matters relating to the VA's budget, I have decided to announce that I will oppose your confirmation unless the President provides explicit assurance regarding your full participation in VA budget matters. I will be seeking the President's assurance both that

you will be fully involved and consulted while any major issue regarding the VA's budget is under Executive Branch consideration and that the President will insist that, before he or anyone acting for him makes a decision on that issue, your views will be obtained and taken into account.

It is my hope, Tom, that this letter will reassure you that my position in this matter is, as I have stated, not in any way related to your qualifications for this position and will help enable you to bring with you to your confirmation hearing clear and specific documentation that the assurances I am seeking have in fact been given.

You have my personal best wishes for success in your new endeavor.

With warm regards,

Cordially,

Alan Cranston
Ranking Minority Member

cc: Honorable Frank H. Murkowski
Honorable G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery
Honorable John Paul Hammerschmidt

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THE DIRECTOR OF SELECTIVE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20435

March 12, 1986

The Honorable Alan Cranston
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cranston:

Reference is made to your letter of February 20, 1986, in which you expressed concern about the role I would play in the budget process as Administrator of Veterans' Affairs and the opportunity I would have to influence decisions affecting the Veterans' Administration budget request as it is incorporated into the President's Budget Request to Congress. I would like to address these concerns briefly.

One primary responsibility of the head of any government agency, in my view, is the analysis of the mission of the agency and the identification and justification of those resources required to fulfill that mission. Moreover, in the presentation of those resource requirements to the Office of the President, the appointee has the added responsibility and right to defend his estimates in all subsequent forums which may effect mission accomplishment of his agency. Finally, he is ultimately charged with the efficient use of the funds and personnel allocated to the agency by the Congress and the President. I have followed this pattern for the last four years with the Selective Service System and found it to be completely successful.

Consistent with the foregoing, I intend to be fully involved not only in the development of initial budget requests within the Veterans' Administration, but also in the subsequent deliberations at the Office of Management and Budget as the President's Budget is being prepared for submission to Congress.

To allay any further concerns in this matter, you should know that I have recently met with President Reagan and members of his staff as well as Mr. Miller of OMB and members of his staff. In all instances, I received personal, explicit assurances that I will have every opportunity to present my view regarding policy decisions affecting the Nation's veterans and the resource needs of the Veterans' Administration. They could not have been more supportive.

In Title 38 of the United States Code, the Administrator is charged, under the direction of the President, with the responsibility for "...the control, direction and management of the Veterans' Administration." In keeping with this responsibility, I will participate in every major aspect of the budget formulation and implementation as well as all other activities which impact on the agency's ability to perform its mission.

I hope that these reassurances meet your expectations and that we have the opportunity to work together in the interest of the Nation's veterans.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. Turnage

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STATEMENT
SENATOR GEORGE J. MITCHELL
MARCH 18, 1986
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman, I join with you and the other members of this Committee in welcoming Mr. Thomas Turnage to our hearing this morning. I look forward to his testimony and that of our other witnesses as this Committee considers the nomination of Mr. Turnage as the new Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

I have had an opportunity to meet with Mr. Turnage and discuss several areas of concern with him. I want to make several points these morning before we proceed to Mr. Turnage's statement and to our questions to him.

Mr. Turnage has been nominated for a position that carries with it awesome responsibilities. Awesome, if in no other terms than its sheer magnitude.

The Veterans Administration, with an annual budget of roughly 27 billion dollars, is an agency larger than all cabinet departments except the Department of Defense, with some 230 thousand employees. Veterans benefits and programs touch 79 million veterans, their families or their survivors.

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But the responsibility goes far beyond mere numbers, for as I've said many times: veterans benefits are earned through service; they are not handouts.

Veterans benefits, veterans services, the whole range of VA programs represent the continuing cost of defending our Nation in the previous wars and, as such, are an integral part of the cost of maintaining a strong national defense today.

Those programs are under increasing attack from a variety of sources, surprisingly, including those in the present Administration who do not share my feelings about the importance of veterans benefits or who do not recognize the commitment this country has made to those who have served it during previous times of crisis.

Mr. Turnage comes to the post of Administrator in a time of fiscal constraint that calls for strong leadership and effective management so that the agency can best utilize its talented and dedicated people and its resources to provide the highest quality service.

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But as I've told Mr. Turnage, the present political atmosphere demands that the Administrator of Veterans Affairs also be a forceful advocate for veterans interests, especially when it comes to pressing as part of the administration for a budget that is adequate to the task of the VA.

The challenge before Mr. Turnage is great. I believe he recognizes that. I also believe that he understands the level of support veterans programs have from members of this Committee, as well as the members of the Senate and the Congress as a whole.

I want to state my intention to work with Mr. Turnage as he fulfills his responsibilities. I look forward to a productive and cooperative relationship.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROCKEFELLER

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Though still the most junior member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have had the opportunity to gain some indepth knowledge about the VA -- from the many hearings and issues on this committee's agenda over the past year. I now know just how challenging and demanding the position of Administrator of Veterans' Affairs can be in any time. But with Gramm-Rudman's mandate to move towards a balanced budget now in force, this job will be all the more difficult.

I commend General Thomas Turnage for his desire to take the helm of the VA. He obviously knows that the road ahead will place him in many tough situations. The President has once again asked again for a major cut in veterans services and benefits. For the most part, Congress opposes any sizeable veterans cuts, and yet has agreed to a deficit-reducing process that requires us to consider all areas of government spending to meet the goal of balancing the budget. And veterans service organizations are naturally concerned about any actions or proposals that threaten veterans benefits -- they will speak loudly and forcefully on the need to sustain the existing programs and meet the demands that are to come from an aging veterans population.

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General Turnage has the background -- in terms of military and professional experience -- to prepare for this extraordinary job. Moreover, I appreciate his effort in the recent weeks to exchange views and information with the members of this committee and veterans groups. From reading correspondence between General Turnage and Senator Cranston, for example, I have been impressed by his willingness to address a range of important veterans issues and his emphasis on the importance of the VA's mission.

I commend General Turnage for his contribution to his country. His record indicates a man of courage, patriotism, and commitment to public service. I welcome the chance to work him through this committee and on behalf of all veterans.

I do have some specific questions related to the VA's plans for addressing concerns and needs of West Virginia's veterans community. Today, I will provide these in writing to General Turnage, and plan to follow up by asking him to meet with me to discuss these and other matters.

Joining everyone here today, I welcome General Turnage to the VA. In voting today to endorse his nomination, I extend my sincerest wishes that his tenure as Administrator of Veterans' Affairs is productive, fulfilling, and successful in (to use his words) "insuring that the care and benefits earned under the law by veterans and their family members are administered to them in a manner which reflects the gratitude of the American people."

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Statement of

The American Legion

1608 K STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006

by

E. PHILIP RIGGIN, DIRECTOR
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

and

ROBERT E. LYNGH, DIRECTOR
NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

before the

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

on

CONFIRMATION OF THOMAS TURNAGE
to be
ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

March 18, 1986

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STATEMENT OF ROBERT E. LYNCH, DIRECTOR
NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
MARCH 18, 1986

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The American Legion appreciates the opportunity to appear before the Committee today, to offer its observations on the President's nomination of General Thomas K. Turnage to be Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

Historically, and as a matter of policy, it has not been the practice of The American Legion to recommend, endorse or oppose the nominations put forward by the President for senior positions in the Administration. The reason for this policy is that our organization believes it is essential to its mission to maintain its freedom of action in its dealings with the Federal Government. It has always maintained a dialogue with the Administrator, but feels it is necessary to be completely free to disagree with policies or decisions enunciated by the Administrator, when these are not, in its judgment in the best interests of the nation's veterans.

At the same time we wish to say that it has also been the consistent policy of the Legion that the President of the United States has, and should have the prerogative of appointing officers of government in whom he has confidence. That is certainly true in the case of the Administrator, and we wish to assure the Committee, and the President's nominee that if confirmed by the Senate, The American Legion will work with him in the most cooperative manner to serve the needs of veterans and their families.

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At this juncture, we would like to make the passing observation that it continues to be the belief of The American Legion that the Veterans Administration should by rights be a regular Department of the Executive Branch, and the Administrator should be a member of the President's Cabinet.

There are presently 28 million veterans in this country. With their dependents and survivors they comprise fully 45% of the nation's population. Veterans programs currently cost the Government more than $26 billion per year. The VA operates the nation's largest health care program and is the leading trainer of health manpower for the entire nation. VA is the second largest employer among all Federal departments and agencies. All of these things being so, and with veterans comprising that segment of the population that has contributed most directly to the national interests through service in the Armed Forces, it is the Legion's firm conviction that veterans should be represented in the highest councils of Government - as much or more so than any of the other constituencies presently represented.

Let us proceed to mention, if we may Mr. Chairman, one other most serious concern the Legion has as to the place the Administrator will occupy among the President's senior officers and advisers. We feel most strongly the Administrator needs to have the assurance that in carrying out those veterans programs mandated by law, he has access to the President directly when necessary. The necessary times, in our judgment relate most directly to the preparation of the President's Budget, the presentation of major

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issues or problems that may confront the veteran population, and where there may be differences of opinion among Government departments as to priorities for allocation of resources. Absent this assurance, and at a time when there is heavy competition for scarce resources, and because VA is not a regular department of the Executive Branch, there is a real danger that veterans will not be treated fairly in the setting of priorities and the allocation of those resources. If this assurance is not given and honored in practice, The American Legion will protest strongly to the President and to the Congress. It simply would not be fair to permit the nation's veterans to have a lesser voice in the councils of government than is accorded to other constituencies, none of whom, may we say have an entitlement to consideration equal to that of those who have served the nation in war.

We would also like to say, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, that the nominee assumes his office at a difficult time for veterans, and assuredly for all Americans, as the Congress and the Administration struggle to put the nation's fiscal affairs in order. The American Legion, representing nearly four million individuals in its membership and that of its women's Auxiliary, and by extension, many more millions of veterans and family members, wishes the Committee to know it is keenly aware of the existence of the present fiscal crisis. Drastic action has to be taken to preserve the fiscal integrity of the Federal Government. Veterans are taxpayers too, and they share the concern of all Americans that our Government be run in a proper manner - which requires that the

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budget be balanced and the huge national debt reduced.

The American Legion has supported efforts to achieve economy in Government. May we point out that since 1981 there have been several changes in the operation of veterans programs that have reduced the cost of those programs, in the aggregate in excess of $2 billion. We refer to such things as the elimination of the burial benefit as a general benefit for all veterans; the imposition of a user fee on the home loan program; the changing of the end-of-year rule to an end-of-month rule; the rounding down to the nearest dollar and delay of benefit grants to first of following month, on the entitlement programs. The American Legion did not believe all these adjustments were just, especially with reference to the burial benefit loss and the user fee on home loans. We acceded to other of the changes in our effort to be perceived by our fellow citizens as responsible and conscientious.

However, it is necessary now for The American Legion to protest against any further reductions or modifications in veterans benefit programs. We do not believe the nation's veterans should be required to shoulder a disproportionate share of the economies being considered, to reduce a deficit that veterans did not cause. It is not the fault of the nation's veterans, for example that the Government of the United States endeavored to fight the ten year war in Vietnam on an economy geared for peacetime. The men and women who served during the Vietnam Era answered the nation's call to arms and left the financing of the war to those who had that responsibility. The American Legion insists that veterans should not be called on to pay for the mistakes of others.

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We also take umbrage, if we may say so quite frankly, at those who, in the public forum, and in the halls of Congress, state or imply that veterans benefits, in large measure go to those who made a minor contribution to the war effort in the various wars of this century, or who made no contribution at all. Whose service, in short was without value to the nation. We resent the statements being made, and the implications of veiled remarks.

It has been the consistent position of The American Legion that the duty of the soldier is to faithfully carry out the orders of the officers appointed over him - as required by the oath taken when entering on active duty. In the military, as we all know, the soldier may be ordered to engage in hand to hand combat with the enemy, or to sweep the barracks floor. The soldier does not choose. He or she merely carries out. The criterion The American Legion has used is whether the orders given were carried out faithfully and honorably. For those who do not do so there are penalties prescribed by the Uniform Code of Military Justice. All those who served honorably and faithfully should in our judgment be treated equally. Those who were injured in combat receive, and should receive, special consideration. We do not, nor do we believe anyone else can evaluate the quality or worth of what is done by any individual who does what is required by the orders received.

Rather than spend time arguing about benefits being received by some whose service allegedly is not of significant merit, we would rather talk about the cases we have to work on where veterans

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who are deserving cannot receive benefits due to lack of resources. Current statistics indicate that more than 30,000 veterans are turned away from the VA health care system each month due to scarcity of resources. Among those, to our certain knowledge are many who have valor medals and combat ribbons. Those who decry the granting of veterans benefits should pay more attention to those veterans. Somebody has to. Otherwise they will have no spokesman; and The American Legion does not intend to be silent while deserving veterans are turned away from VA hospitals and clinics - many of them without any place else to go.

These are but some of the problems that will have to be addressed by the new Administrator. The American Legion intends to bring them, and other problems to his attention. We hope he will bring to his responsibilities and duties the measure of compassion and concern called for by the position he assumes. The nation's veterans have many problems today. These range from the continuing readjustment problems of Vietnam veterans to the sad problems of the aging veterans of World War II, and of the dwindling thousands of the survivors of the first World War, whose average age is now 87 years. All of these are men and women who, in the full bloom of youth, answered the nation's call, delayed their own life plans, and marched off to defend the national interest, as that interest was defined - not by them but by the elected government. These are the ones who now need and deserve the active concern of that same government. The American Legion's voice is raised in their behalf.

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Before we close our statement, we would like to point out to the Committee, and through it to the Congress, and indeed to the entire American people that the overwhelming majority of the nation's veterans never ask for nor receive any benefits from the government following their military service. Most veterans finish their service and then quietly do what all other citizens do; they look after themselves and help others when they can. They do, however feel an obligation and concern for their less fortunate comrades; those who, by reason of disabilities acquired in service, or of the misfortunes of life, now find themselves in need of help. The American Legion will never turn its back on these unfortunate persons, and it does not believe the American people will either. And we believe that all of us have a duty toward the widows and orphans of those veterans who have died. Some special measure of compassion and concern for the less fortunate among us is in the tradition of our country since the War for American Independence.

The amount of money spent on veterans today is a reducing percentage of all Federal expenditures. It is a debt of honor, and it is money well spent. The compassion and concern manifested by the American people is one major reason why its young men and women respond when they are called to national service. This is the American way. It has served our Republic well for more than 200 years and through repeated wars and campaigns. It represents an unwritten pact between the Government and the people. It is the lifeblood of the continued existence of this nation.

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The American Legion looks forward to working with the new Administrator. It pledges to him the same cooperation and assistance it has provided to his predecessors. In meeting the obligations encompassed in the Charter granted to The American Legion by Congress in 1919, our organization does not intend to be found wanting.

Once more we thank the Committee for this opportunity to appear before it today.

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VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

STATEMENT OF
JAMES N. MAGILL, DIRECTOR
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

WITH RESPECT TO

THE NOMINATION OF GENERAL THOMAS K. TURNAGE
TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, D. C. MARCH 18, 1986

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

Thank you for the privilege of appearing before this Committee to present the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States regarding the nomination of General Thomas K. Turnage as the Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

First, Mr. Chairman, permit me to thank you for holding this confirmation hearing at this time rather than the later date originally considered. It is imperative that the Administrator-designee be confirmed at the earliest possible date so that he may take a leadership role in the development of the Fiscal Year 1987 VA budget.

As the record reflects, Mr. Chairman, General Thomas K. Turnage was appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate for the position of Director, Selective Service on October 30, 1981. He retired as a Major General the previous day from military service which extended over thirty-nine years.

Prior to his appointment as Director, he was serving in the Pentagon on special tour with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. His

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VFW MEMORIAL BUILDING ● 200 MARYLAND AVENUE, N. E. ● WASHINGTON, D. C. 20002 ● AREA CODE 202-543-2239

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principal focus was to enhance the effectiveness of training and mobilization readiness programs for the Selected Reserve of all services.

In July 1981, he was appointed Executive Officer of the Presidentially created Military Manpower Task Force. Chaired by Defense Secretary Weinberger, this Task Force was charged with reviewing all aspects of manpower requirements and conditions in the armed forces.

General Turnage was commissioned through the ROTC Program in 1942 and subsequently served in all three of the Army's Components--Reserve, Active and National Guard. He served in combat as an infantry officer during World War II and again in the Korean conflict. His assignments included seven years as the Deputy Adjutant General and Deputy Commanding General of the California Army National Guard as well as the Commander of the 40th Infantry Division (Merchanized).

In addition to the Combat Infantry Badge (with star), he has been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Korean Presidential Unit Citation and numerous service medals reflecting two wars and four tours of active duty.

He received his BS in Marketing from UCLA and an MS in International Relations from George Washington University. He is a graduate of the Army War College and the Program for Senior Managers in Government at Harvard University. He is active in numerous professional and civic associations.

Born in Texas, General Turnage is married to the former B. J. Smith of Hollywood, California. They have a son and daughter--both living in California. General and Mrs. Turnage reside in Washington, D. C.

We trust General Turnage will use his strength and ability to ensure that no one will be permitted to usurp his authority or prerogatives as Administrator of Veterans Affairs. We are always optimistic that the Administrator will be the true

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veteran's advocate within the Administration and this is what we expect of General Turnage.

The priorities of the VFW with respect to veterans' benefits are to maintain the integrity of the VA hospital and medical care system for the treatment of all veterans in need of health care, to maintain the integrity of the compensation program for the 2.2 million veterans in receipt of benefits thereunder and the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Program (DIC) for the 1.3 million survivors of veterans killed on active duty or permanently and totally disabled at the time of death, and to maintain the integrity of the pension program for the more than 800,000 veterans in need due to their nonservice connected disabilities and their more than 900,000 survivors. We believe General Turnage is well aware of the VFW's priorities.

While speaking of the position of the Administrator, Mr. Chairman, the VFW has long held that the incumbent should be elevated to cabinet level to provide him both the authority and stature commensurate with the vast responsibilities of directing the third-largest agency of the federal government. As a matter of fact, our last National Convention has again passed a resolution calling for cabinet status for the Administrator of the Veterans Administration, a copy of which is appended to my testimony. Accordingly, the VFW supports passage of legislation to accomplish this.

Given the foregoing, Mr. Chairman, the Veterans of Foreign Wars will support General Thomas K. Turnage as the Administrator of Veterans Affairs so long as he is a strong and effective veteran's advocate. We wish General Turnage well and look forward to a working relationship beneficial to veterans of all wars who have rendered a very special service to this great nation of ours.

Thank you.

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Resolution No. 699-B

UPGRADE VA TO EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT STATUS AND VA ADMINISTRATOR TO MEMBER OF PRESIDENT'S CABINET

WHEREAS, it is recognized that the Veterans Administration is the largest independent agency within the Federal Government; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Administration ranks second in number of employees, and operates one of the Federal Government's major home loan guarantee programs; and

WHEREAS, it administers the largest direct insurance programs in the nation; operates 108 National Cemeteries; and American Veterans and their dependents comprise more than one-third of this country's population; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the 86th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we propose that the Veterans Administration be upgraded to an Executive Department status, and the Administrator of the Veterans Affairs be designated by the President of the United States as a member of the President's Cabinet.

Adopted by the 86th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in Dallas, Texas, August 16-23, 1985.

Resolution No. 699-B

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STATEMENT OF
JOHN F. HEILMAN
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
March 18, 1986

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

On behalf of the over one million members of the Disabled American Veterans and its Ladies' Auxiliary, may I express my appreciation for this opportunity to present the views of the DAV on the nomination of Thomas K. Turnage for the office of Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Chairman, your endeavors today are of utmost importance to and will have a fundamental affect upon the present and future well-being of this nation's veteran population, their dependents and survivors.

These actual and potential VA beneficiaries -- who currently constitute almost 40% of our country's entire population -- regard the Veterans Administration as the federal agency created exclusively for their needs.

And, indeed, this is so.

The magnitude of the responsibilities of the Veterans Administration and the scope of its various programs of service are well known to this Committee. Suffice it say here that the VA, contingent upon the needs and eligibility of those whom it serves, provides such benefits as:

the finest of medical care, aid in educational pursuits and/or vocational rehabilitation, service-connected disability compensation and nonservice-connected pension,

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life insurance protection, guaranteed home loans and financial assistance for the survivors of deceased veterans.

Unquestionably, the individual who assumes the office of VA Administrator assumes a tremendous responsibility. This Committee and the Senate as a whole, who must consent to the nomination for that office, assumes no lesser a responsibility.

With these thoughts in mind, Mr. Chairman, we in the DAV trust that our comments today will provide a beneficial contribution to your important deliberations.

The nominee for VA Administrator, Thomas K. Turnage, is a retired Major General whose career in the U.S. Army spanned a period of some 39 years.

General Turnage began his Army service through the Reserve Officer Training Program (ROTC), receiving a commission as a second lieutenant in 1942.

He served in combat as an infantry officer during World War II and again, later, during the Korean Conflict. His military duties included service in all three of the Army's components -- Reserve, Active and National Guard -- including the positions of Deputy Commanding General of the Military Department, California, as well as two tours as Commanding General of the 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized). His last assignment in the military was at the Pentagon, where he served on special tour with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

In 1981, General Turnage was nominated by President Reagan for the position of Director, Selective Service. His nomination was confirmed by the Senate and he has served in that capacity since that time.

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General Turnage received a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and a Master of Science degree in International Relations from George Washington University. In addition, he is a graduate of the Army War College and the Program for Senior Managers in Government at Harvard University.

Mr. Chairman, through this confirmation process, your Committee has an obligation to determine, to the best extent possible, just how General Turnage views the office to which he aspires. Any individual nominated for the position of VA Administrator should be questioned most closely regarding his philosophical beliefs vis a vie our veterans' benefit system as a whole, as well as the major programs and services within that system.

Such an examination should, we feel, reveal sentiments and beliefs similar to the following:

Notwithstanding the fact that the VA Administrator is a member of the "President's Team," his first and foremost loyalty must be directed at promoting the best interests of this nation's veterans and the Agency created and committed to fulfilling their needs.

The Administrator should judge the merit of any policy change or reorganization plan affecting the VA or any of its functions -- whether initiated from without or from within the Agency -- on its ability to provide an affirmative answer to the following two questions:

1. Is it in the best interests of our country's veterans, their dependents and survivors?

2. Will the present integrity and independence of the VA and its programs remain unimpaired?

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The VA Administrator should utilize the nonpartisan concept, surrounding himself with staff members of high competence and genuine understanding of the needs of our nation's veteran population. Furthermore, dedication to duty, quality of productivity and personal initiative on the part of all VA employees should be encouraged and suitably rewarded.

Any VA Administrator should have a candid, working relationship with this Committee, your counterpart in the House, and the Congress as a whole. He should consult regularly with the Veterans Committees on matters affecting VA programs, not only informing them of intended funding initiatives, legislative proposals or policy changes, but seeking their advice and expertise on any and all such matters.

Finally, the VA Administrator should endeavor to maintain a frank and open relationship with veterans' organizations, advising and consulting with them prior to undertaking any administrative initiatives which might touch upon such areas as: the VA Rating Schedule, the opening and closing of VA regional offices, hospitals and outpatient clinics and the existing level of any services to veterans, their dependents and survivors.

Mr. Chairman, we feel agreement on the part of the nominee with the foregoing principles is essential if the VA is to remain steadfast and faithful to its motto -- "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan."

Before closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to make the following observations:

As is obvious to the Committee, my testimony today has not focused upon the nominee himself, but rather upon the manner in

which we believe General Turnage, or anyone nominated for the position of VA Administrator, should act in that office.

As you are quite aware, the DAV has taken no official position -- either pro or con -- regarding General Turnage's nomination. Quite frankly, prior to his nomination, we were not acquainted with the General and have had no dealings with him on any matters pertaining to veterans' issues. The reason for this lack of relationship is obvious and requires no elaboration.

However, notwithstanding the fact that experience and expertise in veterans' affairs at a prominent level can certainly be regarded as a "plus" in the background of anyone nominated for the post of VA Administrator, the existence of such credentials or lack thereof does not, in and of itself, preordain that an individual will or will not perform as Administrator in a satisfactory manner.

We will say that General Turnage's distinguished military career indicates that he will bring proven managerial skills to the highest level of the Veterans Administration.

Also, I do want the Committee to be aware that, shortly after the White House announced the intention to send General Turnage's nomination to the Senate, the General visited DAV Service and Legislative Headquarters, met with our staff and impressed upon us his total commitment to veterans and their programs.

We were most appreciative of the General's courtesy call.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, should the Senate confirm the nomination of General Turnage, the DAV stands ready to cooperate with him in any fashion and at any level in order to insure the delivery and protection of our nation's system of veterans' benefits and services.

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This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman, and again I thank you and the Committee for extending the DAV the opportunity to appear here today.

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Statement of

MORGAN S. RUPH

AMVETS National Executive Director

Accompanied by
David J. Passamaneck
AMVETS National Legislative Director

Before The

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES SENATE

On The President's Nomination of Thomas K. Turnage
to be Administrator of Veterans Affairs

9:30 a.m., March 18, 1986 - Room SR-418

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Mr. Chairman, AMVETS is pleased to present our views on the nomination of Thomas K. Turnage to be Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Turnage's combat service in both World War II and Korea, attested to by numerous high decorations and the achievement of the rank of Major General, followed by his service as Director, Selective Service, gives ample promise of effective service as head of the Veterans Administration.

We have always maintained that the VA Administrator must be primarily an advocate of the interest of veterans and their families regarding the earned entitlements provided by law for those who have honorably served in the defense of the nation. AMVETS realizes that the Administrator is only a participant in the formation of policies affecting veterans' programs. The ultimate authority of the President and his Office of Management and Budget is crucial in the selection of priorities as between the competing budgetary claims of government. Veterans expect, however, that within the councils of the Administration, the head of the VA must vigorously defend the institutions which, after long years of struggle, have been established to offer a modicum of dignity and comfort to veterans. In carrying out his responsibilities, the Administrator, as did Harry N. Walters,

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should work closely with the representatives of various veterans' service organizations. We do not expect or demand agreement on all issues. We do expect candor and we don't like surprises. The President's Fiscal 1987 Budget for the Veterans Administration is a serious and unjustified slap in the face of all of our more than 29 million veterans. It is completely inconsistent with his professed support for a strengthened national defense posture. AMVETS hopes that with the courageous advocacy of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs that budget may be substantially and favorably modified.

We support the nomination of General Turnage and wish him well in facing a challenge which will require even more courage and dedication than he has demonstrated in wartime service. A man with his outstanding credentials can afford to stand on his own principles and fight for what is right, regardless of the personal consequences. We expect no less of him.

This concludes my statement. I will answer any questions you may have.

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PARALYZED VETERANS
OF AMERICA
Chartered by the Congress
of the United States

STATEMENT

OF

FRANK R. DE GEORGE, ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

BEFORE

THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS'AFFAIRS

CONCERNING THE

NOMINATION OF THOMAS K. TURNAGE

AS

ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

OF

THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

MARCH 18, 1986

Chairman Murkowski and Members of the Committee, it is an honor and a privilege for me to speak today on behalf of members of Paralyzed Veterans of America. I am Frank DeGeorge, PVA's Associate Legislative Director.

It is with mixed feelings and pleasure that PVA presents these comments today. We are saddened by the resignation of Mr. Harry Walters but we are pleased by the nomination of Mr. Thomas K. Turnage, Major General (retired), to serve as Administrator of Veterans Affairs for the Veterans Administration.

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I would be remiss in not mentioning the beneficial effect that the Honorable Harry N. Walters had on the operations of the Veterans Administration. Former Administrator Walters set a fine example of concerned and dedicated leadership at the Veterans Administration. Mr. Walters, not only improved the overall working morale of the VA, but he included the various veterans' service organizations into the planning and implementation of VA programs more frequently than previous Administrators.

Equally important, Mr. Walters was very successful in bringing a renewed vitality to veterans themselves. His continually used slogan, "America is Number One, Thanks to Our Veterans," gave new momentum and meaning to the debt this great nation owes to the personal sacrifices made by America's former service men and women. We were honored by his tenure as VA Administrator, and we are hopeful that the VA Administrator designee, Major General Thomas K. Turnage, retired, can be as strong an advocate for the veteran as was his predecessor.

PVA believes, that even though Mr. Walters will be a tough act to follow, Mr. Turnage, if confirmed, possesses the experience and credentials to qualify him to become the Administrator of Veterans Affairs. A careful review of Mr. Turnage's distinquished career reveals, and enhances the hope of PVA, that he will be able to provide the appropriate leadership to meet the needs of the nation's 27.8 million veterans and their 54 million dependents. It is also important that his sensitivity be directed toward leading the mission of the VA through his management, administration, and technical skills obtained through his 40 years of military and public service.

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The retired Major General came to Selective Service from the Pentagon where he served on special tour with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. His principal duty was to enhance the effectiveness of training and mobilization readiness programs for the Selected Reserve of all Services. We hope his former assignment has implications that will spill over to ensure achievement of the programs of the Veterans Administration, and to accomplish the highest maximum levels of readiness to serve all veterans and maintain the support mechanisms for the Department of Defense, should a sudden military emergency arise.

Mr. Chairman, PVA will go on record as endorsing the nomination of Thomas K. Turnage as the Administrator of Veterans Affairs. We understand Mr. Turnage has been applauded for his service as the Director of the Selective Service System. Hopefully, this is indicative of his capability to undertake the large responsibility of becoming the Administrator of Veterans Affairs.

The Veterans Administration, whose responsibility it is to provide benefits to veterans and their dependents, is the federal government's largest independent agency. The VA has 235,000 full and part-time employees; only the Department of Defense has a larger work force. The agency, which has a Fiscal Year 1986 budget of $27 billion, operates one of the largest health care delivery system in the free world -- 172 hospitals, 227 outpatient clinics, 110 nursing homes, 16 domiciliaries -- and is a major economic force in the Nation's housing and insurance industries. It currently administers compensation and pension benefit programs for approximately three million veterans and 1.2 million survivors and dependents of veterans. We must go on record again to express

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our great concern that not only the magnitude of the VA be understood, but that the responsibility of the VA Administrator be better appreciated.

The position of Administrator of Veterans Affairs needs to be elevated to that of Cabinet level status, complete with all the honors and privileges so accorded persons in those positions, especially the weekly meetings and the improved lines of communication with the Oval Office and the President. America's veterans, those who unselfishly gave of their time, their energies, their physical well-being, and those who made the ultimate in sacrifices, deserve no less. It is indeed unfortunate that in this country today we have come to the point where many veterans, the public in general, and even Members of Congress have legitimate cause to question the commitment of this Administration to even maintain benefits for those who defended our country in the past while it seeks ever larger appropriations in defense for some possible future occurrence.

Mr. Chairman, PVA sincerely appreciates the efforts of this Committee in serving to ensure veterans adequate representation and consideration, and we believe your efforts would be enhanced if the Administrator's position was upgraded. We also feel that many of the problems currently being experienced by the Veterans Administration stems from its lack of access, its second-class status. We encourage this Committee to strive to elevate the position of Administrator of Veterans Affairs to that of Cabinet level.

One of the most significant changes which would result by upgrading the VA Administrator position to a Cabinet position is that it would permit the Administrator to better represent the 27.8 million veterans and their

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dependents. The VA is credited with one of the larger portions of the Federal Budget and with responsibility for programs affecting such a very large constituency, but this important agency is not presently accorded the authority that it warrants. Through elevation of the Administrator's position to cabinet level, the Administrator would be in a better position to shape national policies which affect veterans.

This increased status is especially important in consideration of the federal budget and the importance of working on an equal footing with other members of the Administration, such as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Secretary of Labor, Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Secretary of Defense. If the Administrator is to be effective he must not only protect the VA budget, but he must work positively to ensure that other departments implement pertinent veterans' programs which cross jurisdictional boundaries. In his present status the Administrator has demonstrated considerable difficulty in receiving the necessary audience and an even greater weakness in bargaining power.

The Administrator also must work with Congress and especially with the Committees on Veterans Affairs, on Appropriation, and on the Budget if he is to truly represent veterans. At the same time, regardless of his working relationship with Congress and the cooperation extended to him, his authority within the Administration is considerably limited. Over the last several years we have seen Congress authorize beneficial veterans' programs and appropriate funds only to have the Office of Management and Budget refuse to make available the funding. We have also seen the Chairman and Members of this Committee, regardless of political affiliation, attack this abuse of power by Executive

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Branch appointees. However, it seems that no satisfactory solution to the problem of strife between branches of government exists, except to provide the nation's primary veterans' advocate the authority and forum for protecting veterans' programs.

PVA does not seek to have the Administrator's position upgraded merely so that the VA can presumably receive better budget considerations. Our point is that the position be elevated so that the VA Administrator can communicate openly with the President and the Cabinet. The Administrator would be in a better position to initiate cohesive plans, whereby all agencies could work together toward making the programs and services for veterans function more as Congress has intended them. As things now stand, the agency responsible for administering veterans programs operates in isolation, when what it clearly needs is more active participation in the decision-making process.

In conclusion, PVA looks forward to working with Mr. Turnage as Administrator of Veterans Affairs, if he is confirmed. We encourage him to seek immediate counsel both with President Reagan and Office of Management and Budget Director, James C. Miller, III, to seek out the proposals that are being offered for the Fiscal Year 1987 VA budget. We trust that Mr. Turnage will be an aggressive advocate for veterans, that he will be an able Administrator, and that even though he has been nominated by the Administration he must, if he is to be effective, be responsive, not only to the Administration but equally as well to the Congress and to the veteran constituency he is charged to represent. The Paralyzed Veterans of America welcomes Thomas K. Turnage and looks forward to working with him and his staff as the many hard decisions have to be made in the coming months and years ahead.

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, that concludes my statement. I want to again thank you for inviting PVA and allowing us this opportunity to express our views concerning this very important nomination. I will be happy to answer any questions that I can.

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STATEMENT FOR COMPLETION BY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

PART I: ALL THE INFORMATION IN THIS PART WILL BE MADE PUBLIC

Name: TURNAGE, THOMAS K. (Initial Only)

Present address: 4100 Cathedral Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20016

Position to which nominated: Administrator, Veterans Affairs

Date of nomination:

Date of birth: 27 June 1923

Place of birth: Conroe, Texas

Marital status: Married

Full name of spouse: Betty Jane Turnage

Names and ages of children: Daughter: Andrea Gene Mitts, Age 30
Son: Robert Mason Turnage, Age 29

Education:

Institution (including city & State)	Dates attended	Degrees received	Dates of degrees
Jackson Junior High School Houston, Texas	1935-1937	Graduate	
Austin Senior High School Houston, Texas	1937-1940	Graduate	
Allen Military Academy Bryan, Texas	1940-1942	Graduate	
Texas A&M College College Station, Texas	1942-1943	Attended	
University of California (UCLA) Los Angeles, CA	1947-1950	Bachelor of Science-Marketing	Summer 1950
*United States Army War College- Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania	1964-1965	Graduate	
*George Washington Univ. Washington, D.C.	1964-1965	Masters of Science - International Relations	Summer 1965
Harvard University Cambridge, MA	1983	Graduate - Program for Senior Managers in Govt.	

*GWU Degree received in conjunction with US Army War College Course while in residence at Carlisle Barracks, PA

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Honors and awards: List below all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, military medals, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievement.

US DECORATIONS/BADGES:
Distinguished Service Medal
Defense Superior Service Medal
Legion of Merit (With First Oak Leaf Cluster)
Bronze Star Medal
Meritorious Service Medal
Army Commendation Medal
Combat Infantry Badge with Star (Second Award)
Office of Secretary of Defense Identification Badge

SERVICE MEDALS:
American Campaign Medal
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal
European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal (Gold Star)
World War II Victory Medal
Army of Occupation Medal
National Defense Service Medal
Korean Service Medal (Two Gold Stars)
Armed Forces Reserve Medal (Hour Glass Device)
Armed Forces Reserve Components Achievement Medal (Oak Leaf Cluster)
United Nations Service Medal
Korean Presidential Unit Citation

STATE OF CALIFORNIA DECORATIONS/SERVICE MEDALS
Order of California (Oak Leaf Cluster)
California Medal of Merit (Three Oak Leaf Clusters)
California Commendation Ribbon
California Federal Service Ribbon
California State Service Ribbon
California Service Medal (Gold and Bronze Redwood Cluster)

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Memberships: List below all memberships and offices held in professional, fraternal, business, scholarly, civic, charitable and other organizations for the last five years and any other prior memberships or offices you consider relevant.

Organization	Office Held	Dates
Current Affiliations:		
American Legion	Member	1984-Present
Association of the U.S. Army	Current Member	1968-Present
Mother Lode Chapter-Sacramento	Past President	1968-1973
Greater Los Angeles Chapter	Member-Executive Council	1976-1979
AUSA-National	Chairman, Resolutions Comm.	1971-1974
	Council of Trustees	1979-1981
George Washington University Alumni Assn	Member	1965-Present
Military Order World Wars	Member	1984-Present
National Guard Assn Calif	Member: Board of Directors 1968-1974	1949-Present
National Guard Assn, US	Member; Mbr of Executive Council, 1976-1979	1949-Present
Reserve Officers Assn	Member	1963-Present
Retired Officers Assn	Member	1984-Present
Smithsonian Associates	Member	1979-Present
UCLA Alumni Association	Member	1950-Present
US Army War College Alumni Assn	Member	1965-Present
Former Affiliations:		
California Council on Criminal Justice Riots and Disorders Task Force	Member	1971-1973
Project Safer California	Advisory Cmte	1971-1973
California National Guard Historical Society	Vice President	1969-1973
Commonwealth Club of San Francisco	Member	1969-1971

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DOD Reserve Forces Policy Board	Member	1978-1981
Institute of Continuous Studies California State University	Advisory Board	1976-1977
Long Beach Area Council, Boy Scouts of America	Executive Board	1976-1977
Long Beach Chamber of Commerce Armed Services Commission	Member	1977-1979
Rotary International-Long Beach	Member	1978-1979
Sacramento Country Day School	Board of Directors	1969-1973
Sacramento Salvation Army	Advisory Council	1972-1974
US Army Armor Association	Board of Directors	1968-1970

*Please note that some dates are approximate

Employment record: List below all positions (except military service) held since twenty-first birthday, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and inclusive dates of employment.

Dates of Employment	Employer	Location of Work	Title or Job Description
Jul 43-Nov 46	US Army	US;Europe;Japan	Infantry Officer
Nov 46-Feb 47	Randall Insurance Co.	Hollywood,CA	Insurance Claims adjuster
Feb 47-Sep 47	Self-Employed	San Fernando, CA	Partnership in Service Business
Sep 47-Aug 50	UCLA (GI Education Bill)	Los Angeles, CA	Student
Sep 50-Jun 52	US Army	US;Japan;Korea	Infantry Officer
Jul 52-Mar 53	Marquardt Aircraft Co	Van Nuys, CA	Executive Trainee-Expeditor
May 53-May 67	United States Property and Fiscal	Pasadena, CA; Los Angeles, CA	Fulltime Officer with Calif Army National Guard - Technician Status

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Jun 67-Nov 79	State of California Military Department	Sacramento, CA	Deputy Adjutant General, Calif. Army Natl Guard; Commanding General, 40th Infantry Division (Mech)
Nov 79-Oct 81	US Army	Pentagon, Wash,DC	Special Asst to to Deputy Asst Secy Office for Reserve Affairs
Nov 81-Present	US Govt	Washington, DC	Presidential Appointee as Director of Selective Svc

*In addition to the employment listed, I was a part-time insurance agent for the State Life Insurance Company of Indiana during the period 1958 through mid-1963. I pursued this activity during the evenings and on weekends and was employed by the Booth Agency located in Hollywood, and later San Marino, CA. The agency has been closed.

Military Service: List below all military service (include reserve components and National Guard or Air National Guard) with inclusive dates of service, rank, permanent duty stations and units of assignments, titles, descriptions of assignments, and type of discharge.

See Enclosure 1 (Resume of Service Career Highlights)

See Enclosure 2 (DA Form 66 reflecting details of Service Career: May 1942-1979)

Government experience: List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments other than those listed above.

I served as Executive Officer of the Presidentially appointed Military Manpower Task Force from July 1981 through November 1982

Published writings:

List the titles, publishers and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials you have written.

None - other than official reports, documents and speeches associated with administration of the Selective Service System. A copy of one such speech - published in "Vital Speeches" is at Enclosure 3.

Political affiliations and activities:

List all memberships and offices held in or financial contributions and services rendered to all political parties or election committees during the last five years.

None

Future employment relationships:

1. Indicate whether you will sever all connections with your present employer, business firm, association or organization if you are confirmed by the Senate

   I currently work for the US Government and will continue to do so if confirmed.

2. State whether you have any plans after completing government service to resume employment, affiliation or practice with your previous employer, business firm, association or organization.

   None

3. Has a commitment been made to you for employment after you leave Federal service?

   No.

4. Do you intend to serve the full term for which you have been appointed or until the next Presidential election, whichever is applicable?

   Yes

Potential conflicts of interest:

1. Describe any financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements or other continuing financial, business or professional dealings with business associates, clients or customers who will be affected by policies which you will influence in the position to which you have been nominated.

   None

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2. List any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other financial relationships which constitute potential conflicts of interest with the position to which you have been nominated.

None

3. Describe any business relationship, dealing or financial transaction which you have had during the last five years whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that constitutes a potential conflict of interest with the position to which you have been nominated.

None

4. List any lobbying activity during the past 10 years in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat or modification of any Federal legislation or of affecting the administration and execution of Federal law or policy.

None.

5. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest that may be disclosed by your responses to the above items.

There is no potential conflict of interest to the best of my knowledge and belief.

WRITTEN PREHEARING QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CRANSTON TO

GENERAL TURNAGE AND THE RESPONSES

QUESTION 1:

Section 220 of Title 38 requires the Administrator to seek to achieve maximum feasible effectiveness, coordination, and inter-relationship of services among all Federal programs and activities affecting veterans and to promote actively the effective implementation of all provisions of law and regulations providing for special consideration, emphasis, or preference for veterans.

A. How would you carry out this responsibility, especially with respect to establishing an institutional capacity in the Agency to monitor these other programs so as to give you a realistic opportunity to promote their effectiveness?

B. Specifically, would you affirmatively undertake under section 220 to be alert to and involved in the formulation of all Federal governmental policy that would or might directly affect VA programs or veterans and their dependents?

C. (i) Have the President, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Education, and other agency or department heads provided you with assurances that they would include you at the very early stage in the formulation of any such policies that are within their jurisdictions?

(ii) [If not] Are you seeking such assurances?

(iii) [If they have] Please describe the form and nature of the assurances that you have received.

ANSWER:

A. The Administrator of Veterans' Affairs must be an advocate throughout the Administration for programs and activities affecting veterans and their dependents. While different elements of the Government may have primary responsibility for a particular program or activity, it is important that there be a meaningful communication and coordination with other elements of the Government that have related responsibilites. While I have not reached any conclusion on how this responsibility should be carried out institutionally, one option would be to establish a position, within the agency, whose primary responsibility would be to monitor other Government programs that affect veterans, and communicate our viewpoint.

B. While I would certainly respect the prerogatives of the other elements of Government that have responsibility for a particular program, I intend to make our views known as these various programs evolve. In other words, I believe an affirmative posture by the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs on behalf of veterans is essential.

C. As Director of Selective Service, I have been involved in the formulation of policy affecting our agency with the Secretaries of Education, Labor, HHS, DOD, and the Director of OMB and IRS. Additionally, members of my staff have an on-going interface with many of our governmental agencies. In effect, coordination with the Departments you mention, and many others, in the development of policies of mutual interest is a routine priority for me - to continue such procedures in the capacity as VA Administrator will pose no departure from the norm. I have been informed that, in the past, the VA Administrator has been invited to attend numerous cabinet meetings and other forums involving veterans issues and that I will be included wherever and whenever such subjects are discussed. Because of your concern in this matter, however, I recently met with President Reagan and members of his staff as well as with Mr. Miller of OMB and members of his staff. They gave me personal, explicit assurances that I will have every

opportunity to present my view regarding policy decisions affecting the Nation's veterans and the resource needs of the Veterans' Administration. They could not have been more supportive.

QUESTION 2:

What will be the responsibilities of the Deputy Administrator if you are confirmed as Administrator?

ANSWER:

The Deputy Administrator will be a full partner in the administration of the Agency.

QUESTION 3:

Do you have plans for reorganizing the Administrator's office (including the Associate Deputy Administrators' responsibilities or functions) or replacing any individuals now in positions in the Administrator's office?

(If so) Please describe your organizational plans in this regard and provide a timetable for implementation.

ANSWER:

It is is too early for me to reach any decision with respect to organizational changes in the Administrator's office. I think it is important that I take some time to evaluate the current organization, as well as the people carrying out responsibilities in it.

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QUESTION 4:

At the present time, two reorganization plans have been proposed for components within the Agency — one involving the Department of Veterans' Benefits and the Office of Data Management and Telecommunications and one involving the Department of Medicine and Surgery and the Office of Construction. Have you reviewed the proposals for these two reorganizations and, if so, have you reached any conclusions as to their merits?

ANSWER:

It is my understanding that the purpose of the proposed reorganization between the Department of Veterans' Benefits and the Office of Data Management and Telecommunications is to improve service delivery. I have no reason to question the assumptions made by Administrator Walters, or the program people involved, when the decision was made to proceed with the reorganization.

The proposed reorganization involving the Department of Medicine and Surgery and the Office of Construction again was designed to improve the management of all construction-related programs within the VA, and to create a unified system with a single focus on management authority, responsibility, and accountability. I have no reason, at this point, to think it should be reversed or modified. I would, however, want to watch closely as the implementation proceeds to assure that it is accomplishing what we want it to accomplish. If we determine ultimately that some modifications to those earlier decisions are desirable we would, of course, communicate that viewpoint to the interested Congressional Committees.

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QUESTION 5:

Administrator Walters took several steps to address the needs and concerns of women veterans. Specifically, he established the position of a Special Assistant for Women Veterans and organized — prior to the time that it was established legislatively — and worked closely with the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans.

A. Generally, what is your understanding of the VA's current capabilities and programs for meeting the needs of women veterans?

B. What are your plans for continuing the position of a Special Assistant for Women Veterans?

C. Do you intend to work closely with the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans established by section 222 of title 38, United States Code?

D. Can you point to any actions you have taken as Director of Selective Service System to provide opporunities for women or minorities, including disabled veterans and other disabled persons, and Vietnam-era veterans?

ANSWER:

A. I am well aware of the contribution made by women members of the armed services throughout history. It is my understanding that the fair and equitable treatment of women veterans has markedly improved since the GAO report of September 1982. All VA medical centers and outpatient clinics reviewed their plans for the care of female veterans and projects to correct physical limitations in health care facilities which might limit access or interfere with the care of females. I am advised that additional medical services are now available for women, canteen services have improved and Women Veterans Coordinators have been appointed in most facilities.

The Office of Information Management has issued numerous bulletins, pamphlets, and monographs concerning women veterans. The Louis Harris Survey completed in 1985 has added immeasurably to the knowledge of women veterans' needs and will help us plan for future policies and programs. All scientific research in the VA now include an oversampling of women and minorities in order to have scientifically valid comparisons between specific groups. While I am impressed with the achievements in the past three years regarding women veterans, I realize there may still be areas for improvement, particularly in the older hospitals regarding privacy issues. I will continue to monitor all aspects of the care and treatment for women veterans.

B. I have no plans at this time to discontinue that position.

C. Yes.

D. As Director of Selective Service, I have strongly supported equal employment opportunity. Currently, Selective Service, with 75 percent female and 33 percent minority employees, far exceeds the Federal workforce average in the employment of women and minorities. The employment of minorities and females in Selective Service increased by 1 and 4 percent respectively in 1985, and females in positions graded GS-13 and above increased by 5 percent. At Selective Service females comprise 31% of GS/GM-13 and above - the Government-wide average is only 13%. We have fully supported the government veterans hiring programs, and have veterans from World War II, Korea and Vietnam working in the Agency. Disabled persons comprise approximately 7 percent of our workforce.

QUESTION 6:

In a January 29 letter to me, Harry Walters noted that, as Administrator, it was his "responsibility to be the advocate for our Nation's 28 million veterans. Without advocates in the Administration and the Congress, those benefits our veterans, their widows, and orphans have earned will ultimately be lost. Veterans are special and must be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect."

What are your thoughts on this characterization of the Administrator's role and of veterans?

ANSWER:

Veterans should be accorded every respect and benefit this country has bestowed upon them for their valiant service. My job will be to ensure that those benefits are made available efficiently and compassionately and that their legitimate entitlements are preserved and protected.

QUESTION 7:

As someone with extensive military experience, do you believe that the expectation of veterans' benefits is an incentive for individuals to enter and serve in our Nation's Armed Forces?

ANSWER:

The reasons for an individual's decision to serve in the Nation's Armed Forces will vary with the individual. I believe most of our service men and women feel service in the Nation's Armed Forces is an honorable profession, and that they are contributing to the Nation's freedom. Whether or not it is the primary incentive to enter the Armed Forces, I believe they expect their Nation to accord them the benefits due following their service, and I am committed to ensuring that their expectations are met. While I cannot accurately determine the impact of veterans' benefits on an individual's decision to serve, my feeling is that they enhance the desirability of a military career.

QUESTION 8:

It is my very strong belief that the cost of veterans' benefits is a continuing cost of providing for our Nation's defense. What are your thoughts on the relationship between defense spending and our national security, on the one hand, and the costs of veterans' benefits on the other?

ANSWER

There is clearly a direct relationship between defense spending and National security. Not so clear, but nevertheless important, is the correlation between national security and the cost of veterans' benefits. Our service men and women must know that they or their survivors will receive the honor and benefits we traditionally extend to those who have served. Without that certain knowledge in each service member, I feel that it would be more difficult to provide for our Nation's defense.

QUESTION 9:

A. What plans do you have for establishing and maintaining relationships with veterans' organizations, especially in terms of keeping these organizations regularly advised regarding significant developments within the agency and affecting the agency?

B. Do you plan to seek the advice and counsel of these organizations on major issues?

C. Do you plan to continue Mr. Walters' monthly meetings with veterans organization representatives?

ANSWER:

A, B, & C

I plan to meet frequently with the veterans service organizations and look forward to working with them. Their collective experience, insights, and grassroots access to the concerns of veterans who use VA benefits and services, will play an important role in telling how well VA is doing its job and how we can do it better. We are fortunate to have the advice and feedback of these organizations at both the local and national levels. Within the time that has been available to us, we have already met with Veterans Organizations and asked their advice on issues that are important to them.

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QUESTION 10:

On February 5, 1986, Acting Administrator Everett Alvarez provided the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees' Chairmen and Ranking Minority Members with letters announcing his intention "(i)n accordance with" the provisions of section 5022(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, "to declare as excess to the needs of the Veterans' Administration certain land and improvements at the VA Medical Center West Los Angeles (approximately 109 acres) and the VA Medical Center Sepulveda (approximately 46 acres)." He noted that the General Services Administration had estimated that $360 million in revenues will be generated by the disposal of this acreage, and this amount is reflected as savings in the President's FY 1987 budget. Under the provisions of section 5022(a)(2), VA land cannot be transferred during the 180-day period following notice to the Veterans' Affairs Committees of the plan to dispose of it. If that letter is determined to satisfy the 180-day advance-notice provision, the land may be declared excess on August 4 unless Congress has by then enacted legislation prohibiting the excessing. At the February 6 House Veterans' Affairs Committee's hearing on the VA's FY 1987 budget, Acting VA Administrator Alvarez indicated that he agreed with that Committee's Chairman's statements in opposition to the excessing of these lands.

Would you please review this matter and the Administrator's special responsibility with respect to excessing VA land under section 5022(d) and be prepared to respond to questions about the issues involved at our Committee's hearing on your nomination? Please familiarize yourself with agency's views, including those of the medical center directors involved. To assist you in that regard, attached is a copy of my remarks in introducing S. 2141, a bill to prohibit the excessing of that land by the VA.

ANSWER:

Reasonableness should guide any Agency determination regarding excessing lands. We must always evaluate the feasibility and practicality of excessing real property against anticipated use requirements related to the Agency's mission.

With respect specifically to the proposals to excess certain land in California, it is my understanding that the decision may have been based upon a survey that took place some time ago. Accordingly, I understand a team from the Agency will be going to Los Angeles in the next few weeks to take another assessment of the land involved as related to both short-term and long-term anticipated needs for that land by the Agency. I'm looking forward to reviewing the report of that site visit team. If it is determined, based upon current information, that some of that land is needed for future VA needs then we obviously will want to take another look at the the surplus proposal that is the subject of your question.

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QUESTION 11:

Last September, Administrator Walters announced that the Veteran's Administration will develop and operate a new national cemetery on a 400-acre Santa Nella site in western Merced County, approximately 85 miles southeast of San Francisco. The land for this new cemetery will be donated by the Romero Ranch Company, owned by the Wolfsen family of Los Banos.

California has three million veterans, the largest number in any state. With nearly half of these veterans living in Northern California, I was very pleased the VA recognized the great need for a national cemetery in this region. I was also grateful, that the VA finally decided, as leaders of all major veterans' organizations in California and I had been urging, that the only viable alternative was to proceed with Santa Nella as the site for the new cemetery.

Frankly, I concurred with the reservation that the VA expressed about the distance of the site from the major populations in the Bay and Sacramento areas. But the VA was not able to develop an acceptable alternative in the Bay area, and I believe it is extremely important that we get on with the project to begin to meet the very extensive burial needs of Northern California veterans.

A. Administrator Walters gave me his assurance that the VA would move as expeditiously as possible to establish the new national cemetery at this site. Will you ensure that it does?

B. Please provide a timetable for the actions necessary to activate the new cemetery.

ANSWER:

It is my understanding that the decision to establish a new national cemetary in Northern California was made in August 1985. I support Administrator Walter's decision and will proceed as expeditiously as possible. A timetable has been prepared to show the various steps required in this process and the estimated completion dates. The first step is selecting an Architect/Engineer (A/E) to conduct the required Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This phase is now underway and should be completed in May of this year. As you are aware, a site cannot be formally designated until the EIS has been completed (May 1987). The alternatives available to the VA are limited, however, and I foresee no problems in designating the Santa Nella site at the proper time.

National Cemetery - Northern California
Construction Schedule

	Start	Complete
Hire A/E for Environmental Impact Statement	March 1986	May 1986
Environmental Impact Statement	May 1986	April-May 1987
Hire A/E for Master Plan	May 1987	August 1987
Master Plan	August 1987	August 1988
Preliminary Drawings	Feb. 1988	August 1988
Construction Documents	October 1988	October 1989
Invitation for Bids (Construction)	October 1989	November 1989
Open Bids		December 1989
Construction Award		January 1990
Complete Construction		April 1991

QUESTION 12:

I am concerned regarding the ability of the Department of Veterans' Benefits and the Department of Memorial Affairs, which are funded under the General Operating Expenses (GOE) account, to provide timely and adequate services to eligible veterans and survivors during the last seven months of FY 1986. The Administration's FY 1986 request for the GOE account was for $768 million, which it claimed would support 18,681 FTEE's (not counting common services FTEE's). That was a decrease of 679 FTEE from the FY 1985 employment level. In Public Law 99-160, Congress appropriated $736.9 million for the GOE account and, in Public Law 99-190, authorized a transfer (which has been accomplished) of $8 million to the GOE account. Under Gramm-Rudman, $32.1 million of the total amount so appropriated and transferred was sequestered, leaving a total of $712.8 million — $55.4 million (7 percent) less than the Administration's request. According to the VA's FY 1987 budget documents, 180 fewer FTEE will be employed under this account in FY 1986 than were originally planned for in the Administration's budget for FY 1986 and 1,059 less than were actually employed in FY 1985.

A. Please provide an analysis of specifically where and the manner in which the VA plans that these reductions will be made, in each case indicating what the impact will be on the provision of benefits and services.

B. In light of the foregoing, do you believe that the VA will need to seek an FY 1986 GOE supplemental appropriation in order to maintain a sufficient level of funding for the Departments involved to provide veterans' benefits and services in a timely and effective fashion?

ANSWER:

12A. This is a technical question that I will be examining on a priority basis when I am confirmed. Based on the information furnished me by the VA, the General Operating Expenses (GOE) appropriation has been reduced by a net of $55.4 million (7.2%) as a result of Congressional action and P.L. 99-177, the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985. A variety of cost-saving measures, both in payroll and non-payroll areas, has been taken in an attempt to meet these reductions with the least impact on the delivery of services to veterans. Non-payroll expenditures such as travel, other services and supplies are restricted to minimum levels necesary for normal operations. A hiring freeze went into effect on January 15, 1986, and will be maintained until such time that sufficient savings are generated to reach the authorized funding level. To the extent possible, funds will be shifted within the appropriation to protect employment and avoid unbalanced staffing situations. It is expected that these measures will make furloughs or reductions in force (RIFs) unnecessary.

The Department of Veterans' Benefits (DVB) will have to reduce $33.3 million and 294 FTEE from the original budget estimate. A reprogramming is being proposed which would shift $3.5 million from non-payroll to payroll and would support an additional 171 FTEE, the majority of which would go to direct delivery programs. Further non-payroll savings are expected by reducing travel, printing and reproduction, other services, supplies and materials, and equipment.

The net reduction in the Department of Memorial Affairs (DMA) for 1986 is $3.4 million. DMA expects a net increase of 15 FTEE from the original budget as a result of revised A-76 savings. The reduction will have its greatest impact on DMA's non-payroll accounts. Funds for maintenance and repair of roads, drives, parking lots, buildings, fences, walls, etc., have been severely restricted, resulting in deferral and/or

cancellation. Funds planned for the purchase of vehicles and utility and operating equipment has also been reduced, resulting in increased maintenance and repair costs, and the inability to replace unreliable, obsolete equipment.

General Administration is expected to have to lose 101 FTEE, in addition to non-payroll reductions, in order to achieve savings of $18.2 million this year. Approximately $3.6 million is expected to be generated in the payroll area; this, along with significant reductions in rents and communications costs, other services and supplies and materials will make up the majority of the total.

12B. I have been informed that, at this time, the Veterans' Administration does not plan to request supplemental funding for GOE in 1986. The combination of the hiring freeze, non-payroll reductions and the reprogramming discussed above, as well as other minor funding shifts, is expected to generate sufficient savings and provide enough flexibility to enable program managers to carry out their responsibilities with little or no impact on the delivery of services to veterans.

QUESTION 13:

A. Will you be available to testify before this Committee when your personal appearance is requested?

B. Last October 31, then-Administrator Walters was forbidden by the Administration to appear at a House of Representatives Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing on the potential impact of the Gramm-Rudman legislation — as it was then pending before the Congress — on VA programs.

(i) Do you have assurance that neither the President nor any other Administration official will prevent your appearing before a Congressional Committee which specifically requests your presence at a hearing?

(ii) (If not) Will you seek such assurances?

(iii) (If yes) Please describe the nature of the assurance and state who provided them.

ANSWER:

A. I am aware of no reason why I should not be available to appear before this Committee when the Committee believes my testimony may be helpful. There may be occasions when we have scheduling conflicts, but I can assure you that I will make every effort possible to meet the needs of this Committee.

B. In the last four years there has not been an occasion when I have not been available for Congressional Committees. In view of the foregoing, I did not feel it was necessary to make this an issue in my meetings with the President and with the Director of OMB.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR CRANSTON TO GENERAL TURNAGE

AND THE RESPONSES

QUESTION 1:

In response to my prehearing question 1(A) regarding your responsibility to seek to achieve effectiveness and coordination among all Federal programs and activities affecting veterans, you noted that you have not reached any conclusion on how this responsibility should be carried out institutionally, but that "one option would be to establish a position, within the agency, whose primary responsibility would be to monitor other Government programs that affect veterans, and communicate [the V.A.'s] viewpoint."

A. When do you expect to reach a decision on this matter?

B. Will you please advise me and the Committee when you do and tell me what the decision is?

ANSWER:

A. I have no specific timetable but would hope that I could make a decision on this matter within the next 90 days.

B. I will certainly be happy to advise you and your Committee of my decision with respect to this issue.

QUESTION 2:

The Administration proposes to achieve $31.2 million in savings in fiscal year 1987 through legislation to terminate the $150 plot allowance for deceased wartime veterans who are not buried in national cemeteries except for those who were discharged for a service-connected disability, those who at the time of death were entitled to VA compensation or pension, and those who were destitute at time of death and whose bodies are not claimed. In fiscal year 1987 alone, this benefit would be denied as to more than 200,000 wartime veterans.

Question A: What is your position on this proposal?

ANSWER:

Current fiscal conditions require that we achieve certain savings levels in the Compensation and Pension appropriation, of which burial benefits are a part. Obviously, Compensation and Pension benefits themselves lie at the very heart of our obligation to veterans and their families and should not be reduced. Therefore, we are faced with turning to the other items in the appropriation to find the necessary savings. The current plot allowance program is not needs-based. Our proposal is in keeping with the action taken by Congress in connection with the basic $300 burial allowance. It restores the burial program to its original purpose, which was to provide assistance toward the funeral expenses of needy wartime veterans and those veterans who, during their lifetimes, were handicapped due to injuries or diseases that resulted from their military service.

Question B:

Do you see any inequity between the treatment that would be afforded by the Federal Government as to those who are buried in national cemeteries without charge for the plot and those who are buried elsewhere and who are denied the plot allowance?

ANSWER:

Let me point out that the wartime veterans who would lose eligibility to the plot allowance under our proposal would retain their eligibility for burial in a national cemetery.

To reply directly to your question, there have always been distinct differences between the national cemetery program and the plot allowance program. Peacetime veterans can be buried in a national cemetery; they cannot receive the $150 plot allowance. Families who bury a veteran in a family plot can use the $150 plot allowance to cover the cost of other burial expenses; families who bury a veteran in a national cemetery cannot. There are many other differences. I view the situation you describe as simply one more difference between the two programs.

QUESTION 3:

To the extent that some Vietnam veterans have continuing needs or concerns arising from their service, do you believe that the Federal Government's programs meet their needs? In responding, please focus specifically on, among other matters, the V.A.'s Readjustment Counseling or so-called Vet Center Program, efforts relating to Agent Orange, and efforts to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder.

ANSWER:

The Veterans Administration provides national leadership in the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Active treatment programs, professional and non-professional educational initiatives, and clinical research activities have contributed to the national effort to meet the needs of veterans with PTSD.

Mental health programs in the VA have responded to increasing numbers of referrals for PTSD treatment by developing specific treatment modules, reallocating treatment resources, and developing specialized inpatient treatment units.

Overall, the Veterans Administration has done an exceptional job in providing treatment for PTSD. Many Veterans Administration Medical Centers have demonstrated their commitment to the needs of Vietnam Veterans by aligning their services to address the issue. Efforts are underway to make sure that all facilities continue to meet these needs. Use of existing quality assurance activities, continuing educational programs, and ongoing review by program officials in Veterans Administration Central Office and by the Special Committee on PTSD will ensure continuing success in this effort.

The Agent Orange issue first surfaced in 1978 and since then special recognition has been given to conducting research to determine the possible adverse health effects of exposure to Agent Orange. To this end considerable resources have been devoted to achieving this goal. In addition to the major Epidemiological Study of the Health Status of Vietnam veterans, a number of other major reserach efforts, including animal and human studies are now being conducted by the VA and other Federal agencies.

Research is not the total focus of the efforts being expended by the VA and other Federal agencies in behalf of Vietnam veterans. While awaiting the results of this extensive research program, Vietnam veterans are being provided a number of important services. Since enactment of Public Law 97-72 on November 3, 1981, the VA has provided over 1.7 million outpatient visits and over 27,000 inpatient admissions for treatment of health problems which veterans believe have resulted from their exposure to herbicides in Vietnam. In addition to health care, Vietnam veterans may voluntarily participate in the VA's Agent Orange Registry program of special physical examinations. To date over 200,000 have chosen to do so.

To learn more about Agent Orange, the VA has published a series of reviews of the scientific literature relating to possible long-term adverse health effects in humans from exposure to herbicides and the dioxin contaminant. Six volumes have now been published and two are in process, including the publication of lay language summaries to assist Vietnam veterans and others in better understanding the health issues related to Agent Orange. In addition to these reviews of the scientific literature, the VA is in the process of producing monographs on such topics as Cacodylic Acid, Chloracne, and Human Exposure to Phenoxy Herbicides. The first monograph Birth Defects and Genetic Counseling was published by the VA in October 1985.

The VA is a participant with other Federal agencies in key committees formed for the purpose of dealing with the Agent Orange issue. These include the White House established Agent Orange Working Group and the congressionally mandated VA Advisory Committee on Environmental Hazards. Every effort is also made to coordinate our Agent Orange related efforts with the various States having Agent Orange Commissions. This cooperative effort has proven to be beneficial to both the States and the Federal Government.

The VA and other Federal agencies are pursuing an active course to assist Vietnam veterans concerned about Agent Orange and will continue to explore ways in which we can further this objective.

In addition to the specific problems associated with PTSD and Agent Orange, Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) has successfully provided a wide range of direct and outreach Psychosocial Readjustment Counseling services through 189 storefront agency operations (Vet Centers) to veterans of the Vietnam era in order to help them make a satisfactory post-war readjustment to civilian life. The goal is to provide quality direct and outreach services to clients who are confronted with psychological symptoms or life disruptions as a result of the Vietnam experience.

To date, 511,850 Vietnam veterans, as well as 300,000 collateral visitors (i.e., spouses, significant others) have received services related to problems associated with the Vietnam experiences inclusive of PTSD or specific symptoms of Agent Orange.

QUESTION 4:

What are your views on the needs of those veterans who are former prisoners of war and on the adequacy of the Federal Government's efforts to assist them?

ANSWER:

The Veterans' Administration recognizes the sacrifices made by former prisoners of war and the extremes of deprivation and inhumane treatment which they endured. Since the enactment of Public Law 97-37, which established presumptive service-connection for a number of POW-related disabilities, we have taken numerous administrative steps to implement both the letter and the spirit of that law. We have established POW Coordinators at all regional offices and medical facilities to expedite benefit claims and medical care. We have established a special protocol for medical examination of former POWs. We have also established a toll-free national hotline for POWs to contact VA Central Office with questions and problems. Public Law 97-37 also established the Advisory Committee on Former Prisoners of War, which is very active in recommending additional administrative actions to improve our medical care and benefits delivery systems. I can assure you that we will continue our efforts to provide sensitive and compassionate treatment for this special group of veterans.

QUESTION 5:

I have long worked on behalf of veterans exposed to ionizing radiation during their service and believe that there is a strong moral obligation for the government which exposed them to a potentially harmful hazard to respond compassionately to their needs and concerns. What are your views on the adequacy of the Federal Government's efforts to date in the areas of health care, compensation, and scientific studies relating to this group of veterans?

ANSWER:

We feel that each of these veterans who contact the Veterans Administration is treated fairly and compassionately. We are enforcing the letter and spirit of Public Law 97-72. A new circular will be issued later this year advising the medical centers of the information we will need and re-emphasizing our concern that the "Atomic Veterans" deserve special consideration.

Public Law 98-542 required the Veterans Administration to promulgate regulations on the adjudication of radiation-related claims for compensation and mandated that those regulations be based on sound scientific and medical evidence. With the help of the Veteran's Advisory Committee on Enviromental Hazards, which the law also established, we have published those regulations and believe that they effectively implement the law. For the first time, our regulations define radiogenic diseases, and the Advisory Committee is continuing its review of scientific and medical literature to determine if any additional changes are necessary. We will work closely with this distinguished Committee to ensure that veterans exposed to ionizing radiation receive all the benefits to which they are entitled.

Regarding the scientific studies, the study of the Smoky participants should be updated in 1988, if funds are available. We would also concur in a review of the "Mortality of Nuclear Weapons Test Participants" by the National Research Council, with development of an appropriate cohort to determine if their findings were in fact influenced by the "healthy veteran" effect.

QUESTION 6:

The Administration proposes in its fiscal year 1987 budget to increase the V.A. home loan guaranty fee from the present percent to 2 percent in fiscal year 1987, with incremental increases to 3.8 percent by fiscal year 1990. The V.A. estimates that in fiscal year 1987 this would generate an increase of $131.8 million in fees collected and, through fiscal year 1991, would mean a total of nearly $1.2 billion in increased fees. The V.A. also estimates that imposition of an increased fee would mean that about 100,000 fewer loans would be guaranteed by the V.A. during fiscal years 1987 through 1991.

The Administration has made this proposal despite the fact that the V.A. does not project a need for appropriations for the guaranty program in fiscal years 1987 through 1990.

A. What is your position on this proposal to increase the fee?

B. It seems to me that this proposal — which results in nearly 100,000 veterans being unable to use their entitlements — really consitutes a "tax" on this important benefit. Do you agree?

C. If you believe that the loan-guaranty benefit should be "self-supporting", do you have the same view of V.A. health care — that is, do you favor "user fees" for that program also?

ANSWER:

A. During the three preceding fiscal years (FY's 1984-86) Congress has appropriated $606.6 million to support this program. The current 1% fee has not been sufficient to provide adequate funding for the program. I am advised that the increased fee structure is necessary to provide a reserve for the losses and ensure that appropriated funds are not required in the future.

B. An increase in the funding fee may eliminate some veteran participants who either cannot afford the fee or choose not to pay it. However, as stated above, I am advised that the fee is necessary to ensure the solvency of the Loan Guaranty Revolving Fund.

C. It is obvious that during times of fiscal constraint, some focusing of resources is necessary. I believe it is imperative that we meet the medical care needs of our service-connected veterans, as well as other veterans with special eligibility, such as POWs. I also believe that we must assure the truly needy nonservice-connected veteran that his or her medical needs will be taken care of. For that reason, I support a modification of the so-called Means Test, which has been proposed by this administration and is now under consideration by the Congress. I also support the legislation now under consideration by both houses of Congress to recover the costs of medical care furnished to nonservice-connected veterans from their health insurance carriers.

QUESTION 7:

Section 221(k) of Public Law 95-507 amended the Small Business Act to establish an Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization in each Federal agency having procurement authority. The primary purpose of these offices is to increase small business participation in Federal contracts. The director of this office is required to report directly to the agency head or deputy in order to maximize the director's effectiveness as an advocate, at the highest management level in the agency, of small and disadvantaged businesses.

It is my understanding that, at present, the V.A. does not employ a full-time director for the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization. I would appreciate your review of this matter and a report from you, for the record, of steps you are prepared to undertake to maximize the opportunities for small and minority busineses in V.A. procurements. Specifically, please comment on the need for a full-time director in providing your response.

ANSWER:

The VA's Associate Deputy Administrator (ADA) for Logistics serves as Director of the VA's OSDBU and reports directly to the Administrator. Presently the position of ADA for Logistics is vacant and the ADA for Management serves as Acting ADA for Logistics and Acting Director of OSDBU. The Deputy Director, OSDBU (a GM-15 position) is the day-to-day manager for the office and receives executive direction from the ADA for Logistics. The Deputy Director is assisted by a GM-15 Staff Director and seven additional staff members. The appointment of the ADA for Logistics as also Director, OSDBU, places the OSDBU directorship at an Assistant Secretary level in the VA, and with the individual who is also responsible for executive direction of the Office of Procurement and Supply and the Office of Construction. The ADA for Logistics also serves as the Agency's Senior Procurement Executive, allowing the Director to effectively promote the OSDBU program with VA contracting entities and officials. This combination of functions places our OSDBU program at a high level in the VA and directly positions it with the individual with primary responsibility for oversight of VA contracting. In addition, this organizational alignment facilitates coordination of our procurement preference programs with the Offices of Construction, and Procurement and Supply to enhance opportunities for small and small disadvantaged businesses in the VA.

While the reorganization of the VA's Office of Construction in our Department of Medicine and Surgery is pending, I will be reviewing the remaining functions of the ADA for Logistics once I am confirmed. I will be especially sensitive to the OSDBU function during this review to ensure its most effective organizational placement.

The VA has an enviable record for creating small and disadvantaged business opportunities. During the past three fiscal years, we have averaged $625.9 million in small business awards and $73.1 million in 8(a) awards to minority firms. Moreover, during the same period, our small business achievement averaged 39.9% of total VA procurement (not including Federal Supply Schedules procurement).

Recent initiatives undertaken by the OSDBU enhance the share of VA acquisitions awarded to small and disadvantaged businesses, including veteran-owned businesses, include:

Vietnam Era and Disabled Veteran-Owned Business (VOB) Program

Memorandum of Understanding between the VA and the SBA, to Minimize Delays in Processing 8(A) Contracts

Pilot Program for Certified Eligible 8(A) Architect/Engineer Firms

Outreach Program to Expand our Minority and Small Business Source Lists

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QUESTION 8:

The Administration's fiscal year 1987 budget request for the V.A.'s medical care account would, as you know, provide for 60,000 fewer episodes of inpatient care and over 1.1 million fewer outpatient visits in F.Y. 1987 than in F.Y. 1986. Compared to the medical-care staffing level for which Congress appropriated funds in F.Y. 1985 and F.Y. 1986 - approximately 194,000 which was also the approximate staffing level a month ago, according to Dr. Ditzler — the medical-care staff would be reduced by nearly 9,000 staff years.

A. Do you believe that this proposal is fair to veterans?

B. If you disagree with the proposal, do you plan to take any action to seek an increase in this regard?

C. If you support the proposal, how do you square your position on this issue with the responsibility you will have as Administrator to be an advocate for veterans and your stated commitment to ensure that veterans' benefits are made available "efficiently and compassionately and that their legitimate entitlements are preserved and protected"?

D. The projections for fiscal years 1988 through 91 in the V.A.'s budget documents show a continuing decline in this Administration's support for V.A. health care and medical research. The number of medical-care staff years would decline by an annual average of over 3,300 — falling to about 172,000 in fiscal year 1991, about 22,000 less than the current level. From fiscal year 1986 through fiscal year 1991, the number of hospital patients treated per year would decline by 133,000 and the annual number of outpatient visits would decrease by 2 million. VA research staffing levels would decline by 520 staff years, or 12 percent, from fiscal year 1986 to fiscal year 1991.

What is your view on these drastic reductions in V.A. health care and research, and what actions might we expect you to take in response to them?

ANSWER:

A. Senator Cranston, as I responded during the verbal testimony, and you seemed to understand, I am simply not prepared to comment with enlighted expertise on all of the implications related to the medical care account in the FY 1987 budget request. As you are aware, I did not participate in development of that budget submission and thus far have depended upon information derived from most limited briefings. These are some representations, however, that are of significance and about which I have been given reassurance:

1. The budget proposes less than a 3.9% reduction in medical employment and returns the system to the staffing levels of the early 1980's.

2. The 1987 medical care proposal requests sufficient funding and staffing to provide a continuing quality health care system in the precedence specifically provided for by the Congress and VA regulations. This would include, of course, care to low and moderate income veterans and provide for the opening and operation of facilities now being constructed.

3. While there will be reduction in the present level of veterans treated, there will be no effect on the quality of service provided.

4. The means test eligibility reform which I understand is currently under consideration by the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Action of 1985 will insure that non-service connected veterans who are not needy use some of their own resources for care before becoming eligible for no-cost VA care.

In effect, there would be no change in policy but a reduction in service consistent with budget constraints imposed by the varying sacrifices by all government agencies in the interest of meeting the objectives of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings. In that context, I believe the proposal is fair and in the interest of not only veterans but the nation as a whole.

B. If, with the passage of time and my more thorough knowledge of the current FY 1986 experience as projected into FY 1987, there is a problem, I would not hesitate to propose a review of such funding levels.

C. As a matter of philosophy, I support fully the President's desire to reduce the federal deficit. The Veterans' Administration should make its fair contribution toward that objective in the veterans' vital interest as well as the nation's. Having said this, I find nothing about it inconsistent with my strong feelings, personal dedication and often-stated objective of being the veteran's advocate in the most energetic way. As I examine the budget in detail, I will do my best to support their interests by insisting upon the most enlightened management techniques and achieving maximum budgetary economies deemed necessary.

D. As stated above, if confirmed, I will conduct a thorough examination of the VA budget plans and draw my conclusions as to fairness and equity on the basis of my independent judgement. I have conveyed to this Committee that the President and Mr. Miller, the Director of OMB, have assured me access to them in making decisions on all significant matters pertaining to the V.A.'s programs and budget. I intend to make full use of this access.

QUESTION 9:

In response to my prehearing question 7, you stated that your feeling is that the expectation of veterans' benefits enhances the desirability of a military career. Given this feeling, have you a view on the effectiveness of the New G.I. Bill in terms of its recruitment and retention value, including not only for the active duty forces but — in light of your extensive experience regarding the Reserve Forces — for the Reserves and the National Guard?

ANSWER:

I feel that the prior G.I. Bill education programs have been highly successful as readjustment measures, assisting eligible persons in making the transition from military to civilian life and enabling them to attain the vocational and educational status they otherwise would have reached had they not served their country. Nevertheless, I am not currently in a position to assess the impact of the New G.I. Bill program either as a readjustment measure or as an Armed Forces recruitment tool. Under the All-Volunteer Force, educational benefits serve primarily as a recruiting tool for the Department of Defense, and I defer to the Department of Defense for a complete evaluation of the effectiveness of the program as a recruiting tool for both the Active and Reserve Components. At the time I retired from the National Guard, there were no educational incentives for enlisting in the Reserves, and I have not been closely enough associated with Reserve recruiting and retention issues over the past five years to develop an accurate assessment of the impact of the New G.I. Bill.

QUESTION 10:

With respect to prehearing question 11 regarding the establishment of a new national cemetery in Northern California, I am very concerned that the cemetery is not scheduled to open until fiscal 1991. Would you please review the timetable for the cemetery and make a judgement as to whether it could be expedited, perhaps by carrying out some of the steps concurrently and let me know your views on this for the record.

ANSWER:

VA staff have provided me with the attached schedule for construction of the Northern California cemetery. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required by law under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The schedule does provide for overlapping steps in the later stages, for example Preliminary Drawings would start midway in the Master Planning process. If confirmed as Administrator, I would explore possibilities for overlapping or foreshortening earlier steps as well, and would implement them if feasible. As Administrator, I would also consider waiving the standard policy that Construction Documents may not be started until land has been legally transferred to the VA. This would prevent any delays due to unforeseen complications in that aspect of the project.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR DeCONCINI TO

GENERAL TURNAGE AND THE RESPONSES

QUESTION 1:

In my personal meeting with you, and in one of the questions that I submitted to you in advance of this hearing, I asked if you intended to be an advocate for veterans within the Administration. In your written response you indicated that your job would be to ensure that the benefits promised to our veterans be made available efficiently and compassionately. However, you carefully avoided using the term "advocate." Could you clarify for me if you intend to be an advocate for veterans.

ANSWER:

I am a veteran, have always been an advocate for veterans and will continue to be so in the capacity as Administrator of Veterans' Affairs. In my judgement, inherent in that role is the responsibility to defend veterans interests; I intend to fulfill that obligation with vigor and enthusiasm.

QUESTION 2:

In response to my question concerning a change in mission for the Prescott VA Medical Center, you indicated that while no final determination has been made, Medical District 24 proposed, in concept, a change in mission for that facility. You further indicated that the fully developed proposal of Medical District 24 would be presented to Central Office on November 1, 1986. I would request that this report be made available to me as soon as it has been submitted.

ANSWER:

I acknowledge your interest in this issue. As soon as the information can be made available, I will forward it to you.

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QUESTION 3:

In response to my question concerning the Phoenix VA Medical Center, you stated that despite the fact that that facility has had to consolidate workload from two wards into one due to staffing mix and lack of anticipated staff turnover, that hospital admissions will not be cut back.

A. If Phoenix is forced to close or consolidate additional wards, can you continue to assure me that admissions will not be cut back?

B. In addition, if occupancy rates on other wards are being increased, are the medical personnel on these wards being over worked?

C. Can you provide for the record the patient/staff ratio for this ward and their average staff/patient ratio system wide?

D. Every year, Phoenix seems to find itself in the situation of having to close (or consolidate) one or two wards which leads me to conclude that sufficient resources are not being allocated to that facility. When do you anticipate that the DRG system will be fully implemented so that resources will be more equitably allocated to areas of greatest demand.

ANSWER:

A. We cannot give absolute assurance that hospital admissions will not be cut back. However, our intent is not to cut hospital admissions but instead to increase occupancy on the consolidated wards.

B. I understand that the medical personnel are not being overworked.

C. The average staff patient-ratio on wards where patients were consolidated is 1.63 Direct and Support Staff for Ward 4C. The average in-patient staff-patient ratio system wide is 1.84.

D. The resource allocation system is evolutionary, with improvements being incorporated as they are available. For instance the system in FY 85 used a model which applied only to acute care, while the system in FY 86 uses the acute care model and models for long term care and ambulatory care. The impact of major changes over a very short period of time in any facility's resources would undermine that VAMC's ability to maintain a quality health care program. Both the facilities which have increases and those which have decreases need time to adjust treatment practices and program requirements to meet the needs of the local veteran population. A phased in approach over the next several years will allow time for models to become more fully developed, for data bases to be refined, and for the system to respond to the incentives inherent in the resource allocation models.

QUESTION 4:

You indicated that if beneficary travel funds are limited to $10 million for emergency ambulance transportation, as proposed in the Administration's budget, you will closely monitor these expenditures throughout the offices of the VA Medical Centers and Regional Directors to assess whether additional funds may be needed. The written question I posed to you concerned monitoring the impact of no beneficiary travel funds on veterans currently making use of these funds. Do you have a mechanism for assessing the impact of no beneficiary travel funds on these veterans and their ability to seek care at VA facilities?

ANSWER:

A study of the beneficiary travel program done by the Maximus Corporation in 1984 revealed that approximately 34% of those receiving travel benefits indicated they would have difficulty in seeking care if the benefit were eliminated. Approximately 4 out of 10 veterans receiving care receive travel benefits, so this would presumably affect 13-14% of the total receiving care.

We do anticipate an impact and will monitor the expenditures of these funds through the offices of our Medical Centers and Regional Directors. If supplemental funds are needed for beneficiary travel, funding will be provided from our medical care appropriation. The mechanism for monitoring will be through the use of our fund control points in our operational budget.

QUESTION 5:

Can you tell me why the VA has not appointed a full-time Director ot the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Utilization in view of the fact that approximately 40% of its contracts are awarded to small business. Are you aware that virtually every major procuring agency except the Veterans' Administration has a full-time Director for this office? Why doesn't the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization appear on the VA's organization chart?

ANSWER:

The VA's Associate Deputy Administrator (ADA) for Logistics serves as Director of the VA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) and reports directly to the Administrator. Presently, the position of ADA for Logistics is vacant and the ADA for Management serves as Acting ADA for Logistics and Acting Director of OSDBU. The Deputy Director, OSDBU (a GM-15 position) is the day-to-day manager for the office and receives executive direction from the ADA for Logisitics. The Deputy Director is assisted by a GM-15 Staff Director and seven additional staff members. The appointment of the ADA for Logistics as Director, OSDBU, places the OSDBU directorship at an Assistant Secretary level in the VA, and with the individual who is also responsible for executive direction of the Office of Procurement and Supply and the Office of Construction. The ADA for Logistics also serves as the Agency's Senior Procurement Executive, allowing the Director to effectively promote the OSDBU program with VA contracting entities and officials. This combination of functions places our OSDBU program at a high level in the VA and directly positions it with the individual with primary responsibility for oversight of VA contracting. In addition, this organizational alignment facilitates coordination of our procurement preference programs in the Offices of Construction, and Procurement and Supply to enhance opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses in the VA.

While the reorganization of the VA's Office of Construction to our Department of Medicine and Surgery is pending, I will be reviewing the remaining functions of the ADA for Logistics once I am confirmed. It is possible that I may wish to reorganize the OSDBU function, but I have not yet had an opportunity to assess this matter. This is an important program in the VA, and I want to ensure its most effective organizational placement.

While the VA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization does not appear on the current VA organizational chart, it is shown in the VA's latest Organizational Briefing book (please note attached).

Veterans Administration

VA Organizational Briefing

Office of
Information
Management and
Statistics

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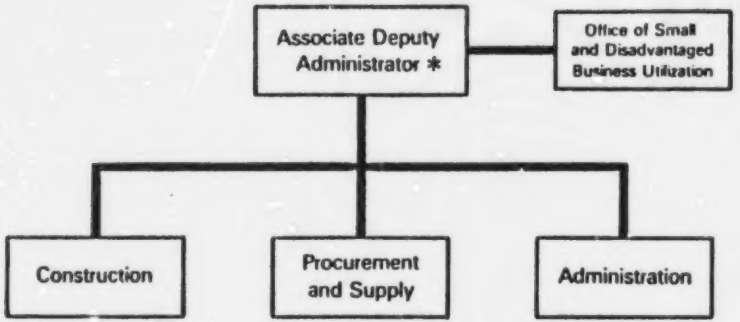
Logistics



* The Associate Deputy Administrator is also Director, Office of Environmental Affairs and Director, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization.

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BIRLS VADS (Beneficiary Identification & Rcds Locator Subsystem-Veterans Assistance Discharge System) Div Chf
Richard Hoffman 175-D 389-5371
Insurance Div Chf Gary Gover 175-C 389-5321
Loan Guaranty Div Chf J Neil Rivers 175-E 389-5373
Management & Plng Div Chf Phillip Edenfield 267 389-2805
On-Line CP&E (Compensation, Pension & Educ) Div Chf Lee L York 276 389-3865

Medical Automation Service
Director George J Monferdini 250 389-5563
Dep Director Donald Nelson 252 389-5563
Health Care Current Systems Div Chf (Vacant) A-50 389-5002
Health Care Systems Devel Div Chf Rebecca S Thompson 260 389-3305
Supply Systems Support Div Chf (Vacant) A-50 389-3875

Staff Automation Service
Director John R Young 244-B 389-2140
Dep Director Anita L Rutih 244-B 389-3779
Construction Automation Div Chf Gerald R Pressler 248 389-2438
Fiscal Automation Div Chf Sandra G Sauls A-61 389-2763
Mayor Systems Devel Div Chf Vidal Falcon III 175-J 389-2172
Mgmt Info Automation Div Chf Claire B Kinderman 259 389-5436
Manpower Automation Div Chf Leonard O Miller 257 389-2583
Staff Office Automation Div Chf John L Younger 244-A 389-2591

Technical Support Service
Director James V Edwards A-44 389-3891
Dep Director Donald Rosene A-44 389-3891
Data Admin Div Chf Donald J Williams 175-A 389-5324
Systems Techniques & Integration Div Chf James P Rasterio A-44 389-2783

DIRECTORATE FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Associate Director Sherman L Naidorf 226 389-2275
Dep Assoc Director Charles C Noble 226 389-5111
Asst Dir for Data Communications Walter S Gust 230 389-5111
Advanced Network Svc Dir Lane W Holmes 227 389-5056
Data Transmission Svc Dir Anthony E Silvera 304 SHM 376-8059
Resources & Data Base Mgmt Svc Dir Allen L Drucker 227 389-5114
Special Systems Svc Dir Phillip Bagato 227 389-5161
Telephone Svc Dir William R Bearden 375 389-5121
VA Data Transmission System Mgmt Svc Dir Charles V Rupert 233 389-5358

SATELLITE SERVICE CENTER

Director Howard D Boyd 207 LAF 389-5403
ADP Systems Audit Div Chf Harry Pancoast 211 LAF 389-5360
Operations Div Chf Sandra Silver 211 LAF 389-5348
Systems Div Chf Charles D Byrd Jr 217 LAF 389-5405
Technical Assistance Support Div Chf William M Benton Jr 213 LAF 389-3518

Information Management and Statistics

Director Robert W Schultz 520 389-2423
Executive Asst Leonard R Bourget 522 389-2224
Administrative Ofcr Hazel H Bristow 533-A 389-2748

Paperwork Management and Regulations Service
Director David M Stone 1036 McP Sq 389-3616
Freedom of Info Ofcr David M Stone 1036 McP Sq 389-3616
Directives Mgmt Div Chf Nancy C McCoy 1038B McP Sq 389-2073
Forms & Correspondence Mgmt Div Chf Patricia B Viers 1222 McP Sq 389-2146
Mail & Travel Pol Div Chf Gordon D Boone 1036C McP Sq 389-2454
Records Mgmt Div Chf Marjorie M Leandri 1036H McP Sq 389-3632

Reporting Policy and Review Service
Director Richard Pell Jr 516 389-3557
Rptg Systems Div Chf David O'Brien 527-M 389-2676
Reports Mgmt Div Chf Michael L Facine 524 389-2730
Reports Preparation Div Chf Pamela Tyler 515-D 389-3677

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Statistical Policy and Research Service
Director Amar J Singh 544-D 389-2563
Biometrics Div Chf Susan Gee 542 389-3450
Mgmt Sciences Div Chf Thomas C Field 550 389-3215
Research Div Chf Mark S Russell 544-B 389-2458
Stat'l Review & Analysis Div Chf William A Maloy 544-E 389-3012

ASSOCIATE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR FOR LOGISTICS

Associate Deputy Administrator Susan Livingstone 762 389-2192
Executive Asst Randall H Bryant 760 389-2192
Special Assistants
Nancy L Darr 760 389-5465
William A Salmond 150 389-5563
(Vacant) 760 389-5565

Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
Director Susan Livingstone 762 389-2192
Dep Director Leonel V Miranda 309 SHM 376-6996
Minority Business Specialists
Sandra P Brown 321 SHM 376-6974
Brenda Degraffenreid 313 SHM 376-6970
Small Business Specialists
Ramsey Alexander 313 SHM 376-6971
Carlos Ruiz 315 SHM 376-6972
Paul Terban 311 SHM 376-6969

Office of Administration

Director Willa V Robuck 110 389-2672
Dep Director Gary J Rivelle 110 389-2673
Executive Asst Harold T Speaks 110 389-5430
Staff Asst Rita M Montgomery 110 389-2672
Administrative Officers
Susan Cross 114 389-2717
Mabel V Dove 114 389-2717

Audio Visuals Service
Director Luther C Peevy C-76 389-2715
Dep Director Lloyd F King C-76 389-2715
Motion Picture Production Div Chf Charles H Glazer B-75 389-2780
Photographic Div Chf Curtiss B Pierrtz B-75 389-3121
Motion Picture Film Librarian Linda Freeman (Actg) B-75 389-2780
Still Photographic Lab Chf Robert D Ward B-18 389-3996
Visual Presentation Div Chf Paul E Hollenbeck C-78 389-2920

Building and Supply Service
Director Paul Stavrou 156 389-2797
Dep Director James A Jenkins 156 389-2797
Building Mgmt Div Chf Lowell Walker 157 389-2756
Supply Div Chf Marsha J Simerly 160 389-2965
Procurement Agent Sandra Dike 160 389-2361

Office Operations Service
Director Andrew M Katchur 154 389-5101
Dep Director Loretta A Gray 154 389-5101
Central Office Mail & Messenger Div Chf John F Sneed Jr B-63 389-2516
Rcds & Correspondence Div Chf Charles E Moody A-65 389-2857
Telecommunications Div Chf Gertrude B Simms B-51 389-5105

Publications Service
Director Charles E Thompson C-2 389-3058
Dep Director Oscar K Caroglanian C-2 389-3058
Forms & Publication Depot Ofcr (Vacant) GR-1 389-2365
Printing Procurement Div Chf Lehman E Nelson C-1 389-3947
Commercial Procurement Supvr Nancy M Brown C-1 389-3947
Government Procurement Supvr John J Fennel C-9 389-3944
Typography & Design Div Chf Imogene T Despol C-10 389-2302

Office of Construction

Director Albert A Peter Jr 447 LAF 389-2009
Dep Director W D Fote 449 LAF 389-3397
Executive Asst Cherry B Danker 449 LAF 389-2009

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QUESTION 6:

You indicated that, if confirmed, you would look into the case of Richard Vargas, a blinded veteran with a Master's degree, who has sought employment with the VA. I would appreciate a full report on your investigation of this matter.

ANSWER:

I would be happy to provide you a full report on the Richard Vargas case along with my evaluation, and hope to have that response back to you within the next 60 days.

QUESTION 7:

As the Director of the Selective Service, I am certain that you place the same high priority on the quality of our military recruits as I do. It was the view of Congress that a New G.I. Bill would have a significant impact on attracting and retaining high quality military personnel. Yet the Administration has proposed to eliminate this demonstration program after only one year. What are your personal views on the New G.I. Bill? Do you believe it should be continued so that we can assess its impact on recruitment?

ANSWER:

The law directs the Department of Defense to make recommendations on the effectiveness of the New G.I. Bill. The decision to close enrollments in the New G.I. Bill was made during the Department of Defense's budget process. Fifteen months of the New G.I. Bill will have run on October 1, 1986. The length of time is compatible to the length of previous education benefits test programs. It is our understanding that the Department of Defense has submitted data indicating that the New G.I. Bill has not had a significant impact on Department of Defense recruiting.

I think there are many variables which go into the determination of why an individual serves. I think one of those variables which gives me great comfort these days is a return to the patriotic motive as one of the reasons. Other reasons are income, care for dependents and the ability to learn a job, trade or skill. Surely, in some cases, the educational and other benefits that would accrue to a veteran's status must be motivational factors for some. As far as I can recall, there have been other kinds of options available as recruiting incentives, to include the VEAP, which was in vogue when I was in the Pentagon before I left service. The degree to which one is more profound than another as a motivator, I think, is relatively subjective. At least, I have no statistics that are meaningful at this time.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR ROCKEFELLER TO

GENERAL TURNAGE AND THE RESPONSES

QUESTION 1:

Clinical Addition for Huntington VA Medical Center

This VA hospital is one of the oldest in the country. In a report to Congress last year, the VA noted that this fcaility has a staff shortage that is proportionally much greater than the national average. In addition, the VA's five-year construction plan includes a clinical addition for the Huntington facility in its list of projects to be initiated in fiscal year 87; however, the Administration's proposed FY 87 budget for the VA does not appear to provide for the funds necessary to begin the Huntington project.

I would appreciate knowing your plans for these two aspects of the Huntington hospital. What is the staffing situation? What other actions will be taken to remedy the severe shortage? Do you support the proposed clinical addition, or have any information on its status?

ANSWER:

I have not had the opportunity to become fully familar with the details of the Huntington VA Medical Center. However, I understand that under the VA productivity-based funding system for all Medical Centers, the Huntington VA Medical Center had a positive budget allocation for Fiscal Year 1986. Additionally, because a site visit team confirmed that there was some understaffing at Huntington, we added 20 FTEE and $856,860 to the Medical Center's budget in October 1985. This additional staffing has improved their situation; they will be considered for further adjustments in the future as resources become available.

During the past several months, it has become apparent that VA construction resources will not grow in the manner which previous planning had predicted. Thus, VA plans now reflect the results of analysis of all construction needs in the context of a more limited resource environment. The Clinical Addition project at VAMC Huntington is one of the projects deferred for consideration in a future budget year. All planning proposals, such as this project, were analyzed with respect to systemwide priorities and needs in making the decisions on which projects to delay.

QUESTION 2:

Psychiatric Care for West Virginia Veterans

In my meetings with veterans groups, the need for additional psychiatric services has been mentioned consistently. In particular, West Virginia's Vietnam veterans have expressed their view that the VA does not offer the necessary treatment to those veterans afflicted with drug addiction, alcoholism, and other serious problems that may be the result of stressful experiences during their wartime service.

There are approximately 29,000 Vietnam combat veterans in the state of West Virginia. An estimate by members of the state's medical community indicates that at least 7,000 West Virginians continue to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder in the aftermath of the war.

I would appreciate your reaction to this matter, as well as the status of current and future services dealing with this serious health problem.

ANSWER:

The need for additional psychiatric services has been recognized by the Department of Medicine and Surgery through the Medical District Initiated Planning Process (MEDIPP). The facilities at Huntington and Beckley are expanding their psychiatric programs to include increased inpatient care. Additional treatment for West Virginia's veterans is regularly provided by VA facilities at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Chillicothe, Ohio.

In Fiscal Year 1985, 78 veterans were provided inpatient treatment for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at VA facilities in West Virginia:

Beckley	34
Clarksburg	26
Huntington	6
Martinsburg	12
Total	78

As the planned psychiatric service increase occurs, these numbers will grow.

It is also important to recall that while estimates of the numbers of veterans vary, the number of these veterans who need hospital based treatment is quite small. Although 7,000 Vietnam Veterans may have PTSD in the state of West Virginia, the vast majority of them will not require any treatment during the coming year. For those who do require some form of treatment or readjustment counseling, most will be effectively helped through existing Vet Center programs, psychiatric outpatient care, and other non-hospital methods of care.

Treatment of PTSD will remain a high priority for the Veterans' Administration. Extensive efforts have been made to improve the effectiveness of the VA's approach to PTSD and these efforts will continue.

QUESTION 3:

Veterans Job Training Program

I am disappointed and disturbed by the President's decision to ask for no funding to continue the Emergency Veterans Job Training Program. In my view, this represents an abandonment of a central part of this nation's responsibility to younger veterans.

The Administration justifies its position by pointing to the increased employment among veterans. I believe we should focus on the remaining problems faced by un- and under-employed veterans. Based on West Virginia's experience, I know that there are many veterans who lack the skills, mental health, and/or resources to obtain adequate employment. With the highest unemployment rate in the nation, our state's veterans need the modest assistance provided by the veterans job training program to make a crucial difference in their lives and become fully productive citizens.

I urge you to examine the merits of this program and seek the re-consideration of its continuation. Younger veterans deserve their country's help in compensating for the losses involved in missing valuable time in their earlier years. They should be given the attention and assistance needed to catch up and join their peers in the workforce.

ANSWER:

The Veterans' Job Training Program for unemployed Vietnam and Korean War veterans has been successful. As of March 10, 1986, over 38,600 unemployed Vietnam era and Korean conflict veterans have been placed in a training program. Over $123 million has been committed to train these unemployed veterans so that they may achieve stable and permanent employment.

The unemployment rates for Vietnam era and Korean Conflict veterans have declined from 11.4% and 7.4%, respectively, in 1983, to 6.1% and 5.1% as of January 1986. This represents a decline in unemployment rates of 5.3% for Vietnam era veterans, and 2.3% for Korean conflict veterans, over the last three years. The overall unemployment rate was 6.7% for the general population as of January 1986.

At this time, an unobligated balance of over $17 million still exists for the Veterans' Job Training Program. Under the present favorable economic conditions and with improved unemployment rates, we do not foresee a need to request additional funding.

The VA, working with the Department of Labor, will continue to make every effort to assist unemployed veterans. In addition, we will continue to urge employers to hire veterans through the VA's Committee for Employer Support of Veterans' Employment.

Within the Federal service, we will work with the Office of Personnel Management to ensure that effective employment programs for veterans, such as the Veterans' Readjustment Appointment Authority and veterans' preference procedures, are continued.

QUESTION 4:

VA's Study of Health Care Services for Remote Areas

This letter gives me the opportunity to note my strong interest in this study and the actions that will stem from its findings. In general, I am concerned about the VA's efforts to ensure that veterans living in rural areas have full and equal access to quality medical care and other benefits owed to them.

I would appreciate an up-date on this study, as well as any other thoughts or information that can be shared on VA's programs for veterans in remote and rural areas.

This is an indiciation of my specific priorities among a range of important veterans' issues. I also have a major interest in compensation and services for atomic veterans, Agent Orange victims, and former POW's, all of whom feel they deserve greater attention from the government they have so dutifully and courageously served. It is my hope that you will help to place more focus on these special veterans groups.

Again, I commend you for your patriotism and record of public service. On behalf of West Virginia's veterans and their families, I pledge to work with you and your staff in enabling the Veterans Administration to perform its critical mission in these difficult fiscal times.

ANSWER:

The first report of the Study of Health Care Services to Veterans in Geographically Remote Areas, mandated by P.L. 98-528, was transmitted to Congress February 10, 1986. Attached is a copy of the report which includes: (1) an analysis of the use of VA medical facilities by veterans according to their distance from VA facilities; (2) findings on the need to increase VA health care services in remote areas; and (3) findings on the advantages and disadvantages of alternative service arrangements, such as contracting, fee-based care, and outreach programs.

A second report, due to Congress July 1, 1986, requires the design of an experimental program that could be carried out in five remote areas to demonstrate alternative approaches for providing health care to eligible veterans and the cost of those approaches. This part of the study which is now underway, will take into account the findings presented in the first study, as well as more in-depth information regarding particular geographical areas and veteran population characteristics and health care needs in those areas.

I, too, have a major interest in compensation and services for atomic veterans, Agent Orange victims, and former POW's. I intend to ensure that appropriate attention is focused in these areas.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR SPECTER TO GENERAL TURNAGE

AND THE RESPONSES

QUESTION 1:

I have recently received reports that the Alcohol Recovery Unit of the Butler VA Medical Center in Pennsylvania would soon be closing. Why is this being done in light of the many area veterans currently benefitting from the vital services provided by these centers?

ANSWER:

There have been numerous rumors circulating in the Butler, PA, area for several years, ranging from cessation of programs to closure of the entire facility. None of these rumors are correct, and specifically, I understand that there are no plans to close the Alcohol Unit.

QUESTION 2:

It is my strong sense that the Veterans' Administration should be made a Cabinet-level department. Do you agree that this would greatly improve your position in making the case for our nation's veterans?

ANSWER:

I have been informed that in the past the Administrator has been invited to attend numerous cabinet meetings and other forums involving veterans issues and that I will be included in the future wherever and whenever issues affecting this Nation's veterans are discussed. In my meetings with President Reagan and members of his staff, as well as with Mr. Miller of OMB and members of his staff, I was given assurances that I would have the opportunity to present my views regarding policy issues and the resource needs of the Veterans Administration. They could not have been more supportive.

The Administrator of Veterans' Affairs must be an advocate throughout the administration for programs and activities affecting veterans and their dependents. I believe I can effectively carry out that responsibility whether I am a member of the cabinet or not. I believe it would be inappropriate for me to comment on making the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs a member of the cabinet.

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QUESTION 3:

In this time of fiscal austerity, is it your view that our veterans are better served by making the necessary economies in VA health care through managerial streamlining rather than cutbacks in doctors, nurses, ancillary medical staff, and medical benefits?

ANSWER:

My highest priority will be to focus our resources on our beneficiaries, so that the maximum number of our employees are engaged in actively and directly assisting veterans. I intend to emphasize that support staff activities are secondary to the direct service function, will be staffed as conservatively as is practicable, and will assume high ratios of any reductions which may be required, in order to protect our essential direct service functions.

At the same time, I am sensitive to the fact that the organization of the Agency is a complex mix, and every individual element must function efficiently for optimal results. A competent, responsive support staff enables the direct support cadre to operate with maximum effectiveness. In the Department of Medicine and Surgery, for example, a physician provides direct clinical care to veterans. He depends upon a variety of staff elements to establish and update the patient's records, to purchase drugs and other therapeutic supplies, to recruit and retain his treatment team, and to repair and maintain his medical equipment. Each of these functions is integral to his ability to deliver care.

My goal will be to see that this support staff is aggressively managed, and absorbs a minimum amount of resources. I will task Department Heads and Staff Office Directors to monitor the allocation of resources to staff elements, and ensure they are improving their productivity through automation, improved procedures, and tighter controls.